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A
D E F E N C E

O F T H E
Christian Religion

From the several

O B J E C T I O N S

O F

Modern Antiscripturists.

W H E R E I N

The *Literal* Sense of the *Prophecies* contained in
the *Old Testament*, and of the *Miracles* recorded
in the *New*, is explained and vindicated.

I N W H I C H

Is included the whole State of the C O N T R O V E R S Y
between Mr. *Woolston* and his Adversaries.

By the Reverend Mr. THOMAS STACKHOUSE,
Author of the Complete *Body of Divinity*.

The SECOND EDITION corrected.

*As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.
Rooted and built up in him, and stablish'd in the Faith, as ye have
been taught, abounding therein with Thanksgiving.
And beware lest any Man spoil you through Philosophy, and vain
Deceit, after the Tradition of Men, after the Rudiments of the
World, and not after Christ, Col. ii. 6, 7, 8.*

L O N D O N :

Printed for EDWARD SYMON, over against the Royal
Exchange in Cornhill. M.DCC.XXXIII.

DEFINITION

OF THE

Christian Religion

As contained in

OBJECTIONS

Modern Theologians.



The book is now
in the Press, is
in the Press, is

Is included the whole state of the controversy
between Mr. A. and his Adversaries.

By the Reverend Mr. THOMAS BLACKBURN,
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sign of the Sun, 1795.



T O T H E

Right Reverend Father in GOD,

E D M U N D,

Lord BISHOP of

L O N D O N:

A N D

One of the L O R D S of His
M A J E S T Y ' s most Honourable
P R I V Y - C O U N C I L .

My LORD,



VERY Reader, who
casts but his Eye
to the Bottom of al-
most every Page of this
Book, may soon perceive of
what singular Use and Ad-

A 2 vantage

DEDICATION.

vantage your Lordship's two *Pastoral Letters* have been to me in the Course of its Composition ; and, consequently, what Inducement I am under (besides the Acknowledgement of particular Favours) to inscribe it to a Person, from whom, in a great measure, it received its Birth and Original ; whose Pen points us out the way, and whose Example gives us the Encouragement, to *contend earnestly for the Faith, to be strong in the Lord, and acquit our selves like Men.*

Whatever my good Intentions may be, I was conscious, my Lord, of my
own

DEDICATION.

own Insufficiency to make any tolerable Figure in this Controversy, by my own Strength ; and therefore I thought it no bad Policy to adjoin my Name to those, whose Works deserve to be transmitted to Posterity ; and the best Testimony, I could give, of my Zeal for *the Defence of the Gospel*, which they had wrote separately, and in different Tracts, *that* to collect with some Care and Pains, and digest into one Volume,

—— *Apis Matinae*

More modoque,

Grata Carpentis Thyma per Laborem

Plurimum ——

DEDICATION.

For to me, my Lord,
'tis Honour enough, if, in
any Capacity, I may but be
employ'd in so good a Cause,
or can give the least *Stay*
or Support to any *Hand*,
more potent and able to
prevail than mine, when
(like *that* of the *Jewish*
Leader) it is lift up to
destroy Amaleck, and to
fight the Battles of the
Lord.

That the *God and Father*
of Our Lord Jesus Christ
may give your Lordship,
and all the other Reve-
rend Fathers, and worthy
Pastors, of whatever De-
nomination, all Glory and
Success in the Defence of
our

DEDICATION.

our common *Christianity*, which, at this time, is so warmly attack'd ; that, to enable you to accomplish the great Designs of Virtue and *Godliness*, which your *extensive* Mind has conceiv'd, he may prolong the Number of your Days, and grant you *Favour in the Sight* of his *Vice-gerent* here below ; and that all, in short, who are called to the like Office and *Apostleship*, may (in Imitation of your Lordship's Care and Vigilance) *feed the Flock*, which is among them, taking the Oversight thereof, not for filthy Lucre, but of a ready Mind ; neither as

DEDICATION.

being Lords over God's Heritage, but Ensamples to the Flock : so that, when the great Shepherd shall appear, you, together with them, may receive a Crown of Glory, that fadeth not away, is the ardent and incessant Prayer of,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's

most humble

most obliged, and

devoted Servant,

Tho. Stackhouse.



THE
P R E F A C E.



HAT the Reader may better understand the Nature of the several Controversies, compriz'd in the following Sheets; whence they arose, and by what Steps they grew to their present exorbitant Height; he is desired to remember, that Infidelity is not properly the natural Product of our Country, but an exotick Weed, which, (however it may thrive beyond the Alps) had no fix'd Rooting in this cold Climate, till the Heat of our civil Distractions gave room for the Leviathan to bring it in, and, in Process of time, for the Oracles of Reason to make it grow.

An Account of the several Anti-scripturists, referred to in this Work, and of their Attempts against Christianity.

From

The P R E F A C E.

*From these two Fountains or Repositories, most of the Writers for Infidelity, who were for making Religion a Creature of the State, or for vacating the Necessity of a divine Revelation, took their Arguments and Materials; till, within less than thirty Years ago, a certain Writer, or (as some imagine) a certain Club and Combination of Writers, under the sham Title of the Rights of the Christian Church asserted, and in Pretence of opposing the Encroachments of Popery, * laboured to set aside at once all Christian Ordinances, and the very Being of a Christian Ministry, and a Christian Church.*

In a short time after, this Book was follow'd (from the same Quarter, as is supposed) by a Discourse of Free-thinking, which, under the pretence of the many Divisions, and contradictory

* Bishop of London's 1st Pastoral Letter.

THE P R E F A C E.

tory Opinions among Divines, the several Abuses, Defects, and false Doctrines, which were crept into the Church, and the Necessity thereupon, that every one should judge for himself in Matters of Religion, has taken an uncommon Licence in calumniating the Ministers of God, and exposing the Mysteries of our most holy Faith to Contempt and Ridicule.

Both these Books were written with some Semblance of Reason and Argument, but in a different Manner and Stile; the one, proper to affect the Serious, the other, the more light and thoughtless Part of Mankind. They received however, from several learned Hands, their respective Answers, wherein the Sophistry of the former, and the Ignorance of the latter, are sufficiently detected; though, in asserting the Dignity of the Priesthood, and the Independency of the Church, some of their
Answers

THE P R E F A C E.

Answers have been thought a little too sanguine and unguarded.

*But these were no more than the first Essays of Infidelity, and weak Attacks upon what, in Comparison, we may call the Outworks of Christianity. For, tho' its Ministers were vilified, and its Mysteries ridiculed, yet the great Proofs of its Divine Truth and Authority remained as yet untouched; till, in the Year 1724, there was published a Discourse of the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion, whose Author, * under the pretence of great Zeal for the Jewish Dispensation, and the literal Meaning of the Scriptures of the Old Testament, which in the New (as he tells us) are always cited in an improper and allegorical Sense, has done what he can to destroy one of the principal external Evidences of our most holy Profession, viz. the Com-
pletion*

* Bishop of Londo.'s 1st Pastoral Letter.

The P R E F A C E.

pletion of the antient Prophecies, in the Person and Actions of our Blessed Saviour.

And as this Author had happened to suggest, that the Miracles, recorded of Christ, might be treated in the same manner, as he had done the Prophecies relating to him; so, in the Year 1727, and at certain Periods following, there came out a set of Discourses on the Miracles of our Saviour, in View of the Controversy between Infidels and Apostates, whose Author, pretending to raise the Actions and Miracles of Jesus to a more exalted and spiritual Meaning, has laboured to take away the Reality of them, and thereby to rob us of the other great external Evidence of the Truth of our high Calling.

Thus were we bereaved (in the Designs of these Men at least) of what the Scripture calls the Demonstration

The P R E F A C E.

stration of the Spirit, and of Power, *whereon the Christian Religion is happily established; but the Excellency of its Doctrine, and the Purity and Extensiveness of its Precepts maintained still their Ground, and remained unmolested; till, within the Compass of a Year or so, there appeared a Book, with the enigmatical Title of Christianity as Old as the Creation, or the Gospel a Republication of the Religion of Nature; which, by crying up the Power of Reason, as a perfect Guide in Matters of Religion, has made Revelation of no Effect, and what additional Light, we received from thence, has represented, either as a pure Fiction, or a set of useless Discoveries; so that, (if the Pens of such Authors were able to do it,) they would deprive us of the internal Evidences of our holy Profession likewise.*

But our Comfort is, that, with all their Malice, they are not able to do it;

The P R E F A C E.

it; and that our Foundation is upon a Rock, which their feeble Efforts cannot remove. For, besides the Iniquity of the Cause, which they have espous'd, and wherein they are sure to have God for their Adversary; they seem not to have such humane Helps at their Command, neither such compass of Learning, nor Power of Invention, nor Clearness of Reasoning, as can inject any great Terror, or make us look upon them as a formidable Enemy.

** The First of these Authors has done little more, than revive the Stale and Thread-bare Objections, which the Jews, in all Ages, have made against the Christian System; and not set them in any better Point of Light, (tho' he has certainly urg'd them with more Malice and Gall of Bitterness,) than we usually meet with in their Writings.*

** Mr. Collins, in his Discourse of the Grounds and Reasons, and his Scheme of literal Prophecy.*

Our

THE P R E F A C E.

Our * Second Author is the most improper Man breathing to maintain the Paradox, which he pretends to advance; for, except a few lame and imperfect Passages, which he borrows from spurious, as well as genuine Authors, at all Adventures, he has nothing, wherewith to Support his beloved Notion, but only blunt Blasphemy, and a stupid Affectation of Wit and Raillery, which he, poor Creature, was never design'd for.

—† Ad hæc Musarum Dona vocares,
Bæetum in crasso jurares Aëre natum.

Our § Third Author seems better fitted for his Task, and has labour'd the Point more abundantly; but, besides, that the chief Bulk of his Book is

* Mr. Woolston, in his Discourses on the Miracles, &c.

† Hor. Ep. L. 2.

§ Mr. Tindal, in his Christianity as Old, &c.

The P R E F A C E.

is no more than the Common-place Work of reviling the Clergy, and cavilling at some obscure Passages in Scripture ; and that the argumentative Part of it is only a weak String of Sophisms, which he endeavours to colour over, and so obtrude upon his Reader.' He is so confus'd in his Method, so perplex'd in his Reasoning, so luxuriant in his Quotations, and so tedious in his Repetitions of the same Thing over and over again, that I may venture to say (what I my self have found by Experience) that it will cost a Man as much Pains to digest him under proper Heads, in order to perceive what he would be at ; as it will do (when once his meaning is found out) to write a full Answer to every thing he has said materially, and to the purpose.

These are the Writers for Infidelity, whose Objections against the Christian Religion, together with the

The P R E F A C E.

*Substance of the Answers, which several learned Men have thought fit to make publick, I have endeavour'd to place, on both Sides, in the most advantageous Light; that the Reader, when he meets with the Poison, may be provided, at the same time, with a proper Antidote against it, and so pass his Days secure against * the Pestilence, that walketh in Darkness, and the Destruction, that wasteth at Noon-Day.*

* Psal. xci. 6.



T H E



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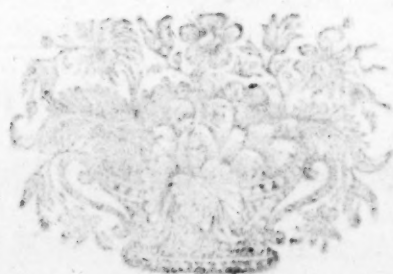


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426 is best.
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ERRATA.

PAGE 73. Line 29. for *his*. read *its*. p. 102. l.
16. for *of*. r. *up*. p. 188. l. 29. f. *charg'd*. r.
chang'd. p. 199. l. 27. add *to*. p. 212. l. 12. for *is*. r.
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THE
LITERAL SENSE
OF THE
SCRIPTURES
VINDICATED.

SECT. I.

Of the Truth and Authority of the
Evangelical WRITERS.



BEFORE we enter up-
on the Examination of
what we principally in-
tend in this Work, it
may not be improper
to premise something
concerning the Writings of the Sacred
Penmen, and of those more especially,
who have recorded the Life and Actions
B of

The LITERAL SENSE of

of our Blessed Saviour. The generality of *Christians* have always look'd upon them, as so many *honest* and *undesigned* Men, who have given us a *plain*, but *rational* Account of our Saviour's *Doctrine* and *Miracles*; and in doing this, were assisted by the Holy Ghost, *the Spirit of Truth*, and, consequently, could not run into Errors, much less be guilty of *wilful Lying*, and *barefac'd Impositions*. “ But the History of *Jesus*, “ as it is recorded by the *Evangelists*, “ and commonly believ'd by *Christians*, “ (say some modern *Antiscripturists*,) is “ so improbable in itself, and, when “ thoroughly examin'd, full of such *Incredibilities* and *gross Absurdities*, as “ are quite dishonourable to the Name “ of *Christ*. The *Evangelists*, no doubt, “ were, on all occasions, liberal enough “ of their Master's Praise, and apt to say “ more to his Honour, than was strictly “ true; but in the matter of his working *Miracles*, they seem to endeavour to *outstretch* one another. *Matthew* indeed is a little sparing and “ modest in his *Romance*; but *Luke*, “ perceiving the Insufficiency of his “ Tale, devises a Miracle of a bigger “ Size: And yet, this being thought insufficient still, St. *John*, (rather than “ his *Prophet's* Honour should fail for “ want

The *Antiscripturist's* Objection.

“ want of his Assistance,) forges a *mon-*
 “ *strously huge one*; as if he were mind-
 “ ed to palm upon his Readers an im-
 “ probable Tale of senseless Circum-
 “ stances, and to bambouze Mankind
 “ into a Belief of the grossest *Absurdi-*
 “ *ties*. For indeed they do not endea-
 “ vour so much as to lye with a Grace,
 “ nor take they any Pains to make their
 “ Stories hang together; which are ge-
 “ nerally such *silly, nonsensical, and un-*
 “ *philosophical* Stuff, as would make one
 “ believe, either they forgot themselves,
 “ or blunder’d egregiously; or put a
 “ *Banter* upon us, to try how far their
 “ absurd Tales would pass upon the
 “ World with Credit. The Truth is,
 “ the Stories of *Christ’s Miracles*, and
 “ other Transactions of his Life, are so
 “ *blindly, and lamely, and imperfectly* re-
 “ ported, that *Infidels* (if they wanted
 “ not Liberty) would certainly expose
 “ them facetiously; as indeed there is
 “ no need of much Wit to make them
 “ nauseous and ridiculous to the mean-
 “ est Understandings. The best that
 “ can be said of them, (in their *literal*
 “ Acceptation,) is, that they are like *Gul-*
 “ *liverian* Tales of Persons and Things,
 “ which, out of the *Romance*, never had
 “ any Being; and this, added to the
 “ *distance* of Time, wherein they are

The LITERAL SENSE of

“ supposed to have been written, and
 “ the Condition of the Writers, who
 “ were all the *Friends* and *Followers* of
 “ *Jesus*, is enough to make every pru-
 “ dent Reader inquisitive into their *Au-*
 “ *thority*, and very cautious in what
 “ *Sense* it is, that he receives them.

The Ob-
 jection an-
 swered,
 by instan-
 cing in
profane
 Authors,
 whose
 Writings
 we be-
 lieve.

We acknowledge indeed, that, at this distance of Time, we are under some Disadvantages to prove the Truth of *Matters of Fact*, not only because we are forced many times to make use of the Testimony of our own Authors, (which may look somewhat suspicious,) but because it is allowed, that, in all Ages, there has been abundance of *fictitious* Writers, which may endanger the *Credit* of the *true*. But when it is considered, that, notwithstanding these Impediments, there are several *Histories* in the World, which, merely upon their own *Testimony*, have obtained a good Repute, and the *Facts* related therein a general Credit and Belief; we cannot but think, that *sacred* Writers are entitled to the same *privilege*, and that, to deny *Moses* and the *Evangelists* the Favour, which we are so ready to grant to *Cæsar*, or *Livy*, or any other *profane* Historian, is very *partial* and unbecoming Treatment.

For

For let us consider it in the Instance of any other Historian, of *Cæsar*, for Example, who wrote his *Commentaries*, or an Account of his own Expeditions and Exploits; or of *Livy*, who flourish'd in the Time of *Augustus*, and wrote the *Roman* History; neither of them very far distant from the Time of those *Evangelical* Writers, whose Character is now under Examination. Now what is the Evidence that any one has of the Truth of *Cæsar's* Account of the *Gallick* War, his passing the *Rubicon*, his building a Bridge over the *Rhine*, &c. or of *Livy's* Relation of the Rise and Fortunes of the *Roman* People, their different Forms of Government, and the many remarkable Battles and Actions, wherein they were concern'd? what Evidence, I say, has any one now of this, but that these Things were certainly recorded by the Writers, whose Names they bear, and have since that time been faithfully transmitted down to us?

These Histories we believe to have been *written by the Authors, whose Names they bear*, because, as to the Substance and chief Circumstances of them, they have all along been acknowledg'd for the Writings of such Persons, and have the Testimonies likewise of several Contemporary Authors confirming them as

such, by the References they make, and the Commendations they give of them.

These Histories we believe to be *true*, because their Authors had sufficient Means and Opportunity of right Information; the one being an Eye-witness and principal Agent in the Events he relates, and the other compiling his Account of Things from the publick Records preserv'd in the *Roman* Archives: and these Histories we believe to be *genuine*, and faithfully transmitted to us without any considerable Alteration, by reason of the Regard, which was all along paid to them, the many Copies, which, from the very first, were taken of them, and the concurring Testimony of every subsequent Age, without any manner of Suspicion, or Mark of Imposture upon them.

This is the Proof, and all the Proof we have of the Truth and Authority of these Histories: And yet does any Man pretend to doubt, whether *Cæsar* wrote his *Commentaries*, or *Livy* the *Roman* History; or whether the Relations concerning the Foundation and great Turns of Government, or the remarkable Battles and Events which happened, were true? The Man that should call in Question either the Reality of these Facts, or the Authority of the

the Relation, would hardly escape being accounted unreasonably prejudic'd, and unaccountably singular, in affecting thus to oppose the common Sense of Mankind.

To apply this to the present Case, we need only to say, that the Gospel-History is of as clear and unquestionable Authority as any other antient History whatever, and in that Respect stands at least upon an equal Foot with *Cæsar* or *Livy*.

The *Evangelists*, we own, were the *Friends* and *Followers* of Jesus; but if this must affect their Credit as *Historians*, by parity of Reason, every thing we read in any *Roman* or *Greek* Author may come under the same Fate. We have hitherto indeed belived them *implicitly*, and upon their own *Testimony*; but (if the Question should be put) how do we know, whether ever the *Roman Empire* prevailed, and extended it self to the Bounds of the then-known World, as is pretended? ^a For was not this related by Persons of the same Country, and, for that Reason, bound to *aggrandize* its Fame? And may not a thousand Records be lost, which, if they were now extant, would give a quite different turn to the Story? *Carthage* might have the better in the Contest; *Hanni-*

B 4

bal

^a A Letter to a Deist, p. 17.

bal overthrow *Scipio*, and the *Persians* quite subdue the *Macedonians*, for any thing we know, since the present Histories were written by Men of the *Roman* Interest in one Case, and, in the other, all our Accounts of *Alexander's* Expedition were *originally* from the *Greeks*. These Authors, it is certain, had the same Biass of *national Affection* upon their Minds; but none of them gave the thousand part of that Evidence for their Fidelity, which the Writers of the *Evangelical* History did: and yet, what should we think of a Person, who should call in Question the best Histories of all Nations, merely because they were written by those of the same Country? What indeed, but that he was going to destroy all *historical Faith* at once, since Books of this kind must not be wrote by *Friends* and *Acquaintance*, for fear of *Partiality*; nor could they be wrote by *Strangers* or *Enemies*, without giving a much greater Umbrage to suspect both the Sufficiency of their *Knowledge*, and the Strength of their *Integrity*.

The Truth is, no tolerable Reason can be assigned, why *Credit* should not be given to *sacred*, as well as *profane* History, unless it should appear, that there is not the same *Evidence of Credibility*.

bility, or the same Marks of *historical Truth* inherent in the one, as may be supposed to be found in the other; which is the Question we are now going to consider.

That, in the Reign of *Tiberius*, there lived such a Person as *Jesus Christ*, and suffered Death under *Pontius Pilate*, the Roman Governour in *Judæa*, is what *Christians* in all Countries profess; what *Jews* of all Ages have acknowledged; and what even *Heathen* Authors, (such^b as *Suetonius*, *Tacitus*, and *Pliny*, jun.) have recorded. That this *Jesus* had, from the very first, a Succession of Men to publish his Doctrines, and to testify to the World the History of his Life and Actions; and that, in a short space of Time, a certain Number of approved *Historians* recorded them in Writing, to be the *Pillar and Foundation of all Truth* (as the *Ancients* call it) is what the earliest Writers in the *Christian Church* relate, and our present Possession of the Books themselves does imply. That the Books, which have descended to us, are the same which these *Historians* indited, the Writers of the very next Age, and every Age since, have asserted; both *Jews* and *Heathens*, in their Tracts against

The present State
of the
Gospels.

^a Vid. Grot. de veritate Christ. Rel.
^c Bp. Gibson's first pastoral Letter.

against *Christianity* have allowed ; and the numerous Passages cited from them, and in their Names, even to this Day, do evince. And, lastly, that the *Contents* of these Books, in their descent to us, have not suffered any considerable *Alteration* ; but, (excepting some few Variations, occasioned by the Negligence of *Transcribers*,) from the Days of the *Apostle*, and *apostolick* Men, to the present Age, have always been the same ; the long Continuance of the *Autographa* in the *Church*, the many *Copies* and *Transcripts* taken from them, and their early *Translations* into various Languages, have, under the Providence of God, been our Security.

Since then we have in our Hand *authentick* Records of our Saviour's Life and Actions, let us look a little into them, and see, whether their Authors have been defective in any of the *Marks* and *Characters* of *true Historians*.

The E-
vangelists
true Hi-
storians,
from
their own
Character.

That the *Evangelists* were Persons of too much *Truth* and *Honesty*, to relate any wilful *Lyes*, is evident from the whole Tenor of their Writings ; where- in the strictest Precepts about *speaking Truth*, and the severest Prohibitions of *Guile* and *Disimulation* either in our Words or Actions, do every where meet us. Men of *Cunning* and *Artifice* have

have all their fawning and insinuating Ways, to captivate the Weak, and such as delight in Flattery ; but, with what *Plainness* and *Simplicity* do they go about to persuade Men to become *Christians*, when they barely relate the Matters of Fact concerning the *Resurrection* of *Jesus*, saying, that they themselves were *Eye-witnesses* of it, and, upon the Credit of this their Testimony, expect that we should assent? Had they been minded to *aggrandize their Master*, they would have displayed indeed the Wonderfulness of his *Birth*, the many *Miracles* he wrought, the *Descent* of the *Holy Ghost* upon him, the Voice from Heaven declaring him to be the *Son of God*, the Glories of his *Resurrection*, and the Triumph of his *Ascension* ; but by all means wou'd they have labour'd to conceal the Obscurity of his Birth and Parentage, the low Condition of his Life, and the shameful and ignominious Circumstances of his Death. Had they been minded to *extol him above measure*, as a great and mighty Worker of Miracles, they would have expatiated upon every one that came in their way, and not compriz'd *some* in the short compass of a Verse or two, and conceal'd *others* under a general *Enumeration*, as we find them frequently do. Had they design'd

sign'd to set off themselves ; their Labours, and Perils, and bold Adventures for the sake of the Gospel they might have described in all their *pleasing Horror*, but (what is a singular Instance of their *Truth* and *Ingenuity*) their own mean Extraction and Employments, their Ignorance and Mistakes, their ambitious Contentions, cowardly Desertions, and base Denial of their Lord, in the Time of the greatest Exigence and Distress, they themselves have left upon Record, for all succeeding Ages to peruse and censure. Or had they design'd any private Profit or Advantage to themselves, they took the most improper Method in the World, in publishing what, *to the Jews*, they knew, would be a *Stumbling-block*, and *to the Gentiles*, *foolishness*; and what, they could not but foresee, would expose both them and their Companions to Scorn and Contempt, to Dangers and Hazards, to Poverty and Want, to Bonds and Imprisonment, and Death itself.

Their
Sufficiency
of Intelligence.

Now when Persons are both above the Views of Secular Interest, and forward to lay open their own Faults and Failings, merely for the Sake of Truth, 'tis a strong Presumption that they have no Inclination to write Falshoods ; if so be they are but *competent Judges* of what they

they are about, and have sufficient *means of Information* in their Power. And herein the *Evangelists* could not be defective, because (even upon the Supposition of no Divine Assistance or *Inspiration*) they had Persons enough living, to give them full Instructions as to the great Periods and Actions of our Saviour's Life. ^d Of his *Conception* and *Birth*, and other Particulars preceding his *Baptism*, they might have an Account from *Simeon* and *Anna*, and the Parents of *John*, as well as from *Joseph* and *Mary*. Of his *Baptism*, and what thereupon ensu'd, they might have Intelligence from *John* and his Disciples. Of his *Fasting* and *Temptation*, from the same *John*, who not unlikely retir'd with him into the Wilderness, (where himself had been before) and continu'd with him until his return; and of the several Transactions in his *publick Ministry*, they themselves (as well as the other Apostles) were *Eye and Ear-witnesses*, and as competent Judges of what they heard and saw, as the greatest Philosophers living. By these and several other Helps, they might be supply'd with proper Materials for their respective Histories; and when they had thus compil'd them, (we speak still upon the Supposition of no *Inspiration*) their

Fidelity

Fidelity appear'd, in their speedy committing them to Writing. For, according to the best Account of *Antiquity*, St. *Matthew* wrote his Gospel about *eight*, St. *Mark* about *ten*, St. *Luke* within *fifteen*, and St. *John*, not much above *two and thirty* Years, after our Saviour's Ascension ; left any thing, deserving the Notice, or necessary to the Salvation of Posterity, might escape their Memories, by reason of too long a delay.

The Contents of their Gospels.

And indeed, if we look into the *Contents* of the *Histories*, as well as the *Characters* of the *Historians*, we shall soon perceive such a *Simplicity*, as well as *Majesty* in their *Narrations*, such *Purity* in their *Precepts*, and such *Sublimity* in their *Doctrines*, as plainly denote them to be a *Divine Revelation*.

Men of quick Parts and Ingenuity, 'tis true, may tell us *cunningly-devised Fables*, and amuse their Readers with *Tales* and *Romances*, that had never any Foundation in Nature : But, to frame such an excellent *System* of *Morality*, as is contain'd in the *Gospels* ; to give such an extraordinary Account of the Satisfaction for Sin, and of the Nature and Office of a *Mediator* ; to feign the Life and Actions of a *Messiah*, which should agree so exactly with the *Predictions* of the *Prophets*, and the *Types* and *Prefigurations*

gurations of the *Mosaic Law* ; and to make the *Rewards* and *Punishments* of another Life so agreeable to humane Reason, and so worthy of Divine Majesty ; this was a *Scheme*, which these poor *illiterate Men* were no more able to *invent*, than they were to *create* a World : And yet, notwithstanding the great variety and difficulty of this Province, 'tis wonderful to observe, how all the four Evangelists, who wrote at different Times, and in distant Places, agree, not only in the main *Topicks*, but sometimes in the most minute Circumstances ; in so much that, whenever they seem to disagree, (which chiefly arises from their not confining themselves to the *same Words*, or the *same Order of Time*, and, with a little *critical* Observation, may easily be reconciled) whenever they disagree, I say, it looks as if the Spirit of God design'd on purpose that it should be so, not only that they might be *distinct* Witnesses of the same Things, but that all succeeding Ages of the Christian World might see with their Eyes, that they neither *transcribed* from one another, nor *combin'd* nor *complotted* together, like crafty Knaves.

I might here produce the Testimony which God gave to the Truth of the Gospel,

*Grew's *Cosmologia Sacra*. p. 304.

Gospel, * *by Signs and Wonders, and by diverse Miracles, and Gifts of the Holy Ghost*; and what a mighty Proof the *Evangelists* themselves gave of their Fidelity in composing those Writings, which they, and *Thousands* more, were not afraid to seal with their Blood: But, because an Agreement with other Authors is always reputed a good Token of *Historical* Probity, I shall rather take notice of some few Facts, whereby the professed Enemies of *Christianity*, both *Jews* and *Pagans*, have confirm'd the Authority of these *Sacred* Penmen.

The Testimony of other Authors.

^f The coming of a King out of the East, who should do great and mighty Actions, was a constant Report (founded on the *Sibylline Prophecies*) which prevail'd about the Time of our Saviour's Birth, and ^g *Tacitus*, (as a great Politician and Statesman,) will needs have it fulfill'd in *Vespasian* or *Titus*, because they were called out of *Judæa* to the Empire of *Rome*. The Appearance of a wonderful Star, at the Time of his Nativity is mention'd by ^h *Pliny* in his *Natural History*, under the Name of a bright Comet. The Murther of the Babes of *Bethlehem* is mention'd by *Dion* in his Life

* Heb. ii. 4.

^f *Edwards's* Truth and Authority of the Holy Scripture. ^g L. 2. & 25. ^h *Sa-*

turnal, L. 2. c. 4.

Christ. " At this time there was one
 " *Jesus*, a wise Man, if I may call him
 " a Man, for he did most wonderful
 " Works, and was a Teacher of those,
 " who receiv'd the Truth with Delight :
 " He brought many to his Persuasion,
 " both of the *Jews* and *Gentiles*. This
 " was Christ : And tho' he was, by the
 " Instigation of some of our Nation, and
 " by *Pilate's* Sentence hung on the
 " *Cross*, yet those, who loved him at
 " first, did not cease to do so : For he
 " came to Life again the third Day, and
 " appeared to them ; the Divine Pro-
 " phets having foretold these and in-
 " finite other Wonders of him : And to
 " this Day there remains a Sect of Men,
 " who have from him the Name of
 " *Christians*." A Passage, which (as
 ' a learned *French* Author has fully
 prov'd) is far from being an *Interpolat-*
tion.

An Infe-
 rence
 from the
 whole.

Upon a Review of what has been
 said then, with Relation to the *Evange-*
lists, viz. That they were *honest* and
undesigning Men, recording Things *plain-*
ly, and without any artful Insinuations,
 and so free and impartial in their Ac-
 counts, as neither to conceal their Ma-
 ster's mean Condition, nor their own
 Faults and Failings ; that they had suf-
 ficient

! Mr. *Martin*.

ficient means of Information in what they were to Record, and no visible Interest in the least, to sway them against their Knowledge ; that they ventured to publish their Gospels in a short Time after their Lord's Ascension, though they knew that Shame, and Persecution, and Death itself (which they underwent with the utmost Bravery) would be the result of so doing ; that their Gospels, when made publick, appear'd to be far above their Skill and Capacity to invent, singly consider'd, and, when compar'd together, sufficiently uniform and consistent ; and (what is no mean Consideration) that their greatest Enemies have, in their own Writings, either asserted or acknowledg'd the most material Parts of their Narrations : It must needs follow, that, according to the *genuine* Marks of a true Historian, we have greater Security, than any *humane* History can pretend to, of the Faithfulness of the *Evangelists*, and of the Certainty of every thing contained in their Writings : That Persons, situated in their Circumstances, even consider'd as *common* Historians, *would not* have deluded us with a false Representation of Things, but then, consider'd in the Capacity of *inspir'd* Historians, (which Christians in all Ages have esteem'd them) they *could*

not (without making God necessary to the Fraud) have banter'd our Credulity, and impos'd upon us false and romantick Fables : and, consequently, that the many Faults and Absurdities, complain'd of by some, cannot be in the Writings themselves, but are too probably in the *Hearts* of the Complainers : For, * *if our Gospel*, i. e. the Beauty and Excellency of our Gospel *be hid*, says the Apostle, *it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the God of this World hath blinded the Minds of them which believe not, lest the Light of the glorious Gospel of Christ (who is the Image of God) should shine unto them.*



S E C T. II.

Of the Inspiration of the Evangelical Writers.

An Ob-
jection.

“ BUT why should we conceive so
 “ great a Notion of *the glorious*
 “ *Gospel of Christ*, as you call it, when,
 “ upon Examination, we find it not
 “ near so good, as some *humane Com-*
 “ *positions* ? At the best, 'tis but a sim-
 “ ple Narrative of a plain Man's Life,
 “ with

* 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4.

“ with some Occasional Epistles from a
 “ few of his Followers, written in a
 “ negligent Stile, and confused Method;
 “ and is there any thing in all this,
 “ that a Person of a tolerable Capacity
 “ may not perform? To suppose that
 “ the Writers of these Things needed a
 “ *supernatural* Assistance, or that the
 “ Spirit of God either suggested the
 “ *Matter*, or super-intended the *Disti-*
 “ *on*, when they were recording them
 “ to Posterity, is vain and idle, if not
 “ profane and blasphemous; especially
 “ considering that the very Writers
 “ themselves, by the *Errors and Offen-*
 “ *ces* of their personal Conduct, their
 “ *Inconsistences*, if not Contradictions in
 “ several Instances, their *Misquotations*
 “ of some Passages in Scripture, and their
 “ *doubtful* and indiffinate *manner* of ex-
 “ pressing others; by their giving *Dire-*
 “ *ctions* in Matters of a *trivial* Nature,
 “ their *exhorting* their Followers to the
 “ means of acquiring Knowledge, their
 “ *consulting* with one another in difficult
 “ Questions, and their frequent *Declara-*
 “ *tions*, that themselves both spake and
 “ wrote according to their own Senti-
 “ ments, (all inconsistent with a Divine
 “ Inspiration,) give us sufficient Reason
 “ to think, that, in their Compositions,
 “ they were actuated no otherwise,

“ than common Authors are, who are left
 “ to the Exercise of their own Facul-
 “ ties and Inventions. For, to say no-
 “ thing of the need which St. *Peter* had
 “ (even after the Descent of the Holy
 “ Ghost) ^a of a Vision, to rectify his
 “ Notions about Preaching the Gospel
 “ to the Gentiles ; who can imagine,
 “ that his ^b gross Dissimulation at *An-*
 “ *tioch*, (even after this Vision had in-
 “ structed him better,) should be any
 “ Indication of a Divine Principle resi-
 “ ding in him ? The Spirit of God is
 “ certainly the Spirit of Truth and Har-
 “ mony ; but when the Evangelists
 “ relate several Actions of our Savi-
 “ our’s Life, nay, even his *Genealogy* at
 “ their first setting out, in a different,
 “ if not contradictory manner ; when
 “ *Matthew* tells us, that his ^c *being cal-*
 “ *led a Nazarene* was predicted, though
 “ no Word like it is to be found in any
 “ of the Prophets, ^d and under *Jere-*
 “ *miah’s* Name miscites a Passage in the
 “ Prophet *Zechary* ; and when *John*
 “ speaks in such dubious and uncertain
 “ Language, as ^e *about the first Hour of*
 “ *the Day*, and ^f *as it were two hundred*
 “ *Cubits, &c.* (which he certainly would
 “ not have done, had he known bet-

^a Acts xv. 7. ^b Gal. ii. 11. ^c Ch. ii. 25. ^d Ch.
 xxvii. 9. ^e Ch. xix. 14. ^f Ch. xxi. 8.

“ter) how can we suppose, that Men,
 “endowed with the infallible Spirit of
 “God, should commit such Blunders,
 “or labour under such Uncertainties?
 “’Tis below the Dignity of the third
 “Person in the *Trinity*, one would
 “think, to concern himself about a
 “*Cloak and Parchments*, or the little
 “Salutations, which *St. Paul* sends to
 “his Fellow-Converts and Familiars;
 “nor can we conceive why he should
 “so strictly enjoin *Timothy* to ^hgive At-
 “tendance to Reading, and Meditation,
 “(which a miraculous Infusion certain-
 “ly vacates) or why the other Apo-
 “stles should dispute and confer toge-
 “ther, before they came to a Resolu-
 “tion ⁱ at the Synod of *Jerusalem*; if
 “each of them singly had been suffici-
 “ently inspired to determine the Que-
 “stion. But the plain Truth is, the
 “Apostle to the Gentiles is so far from
 “arrogating to himself any such mira-
 “culous Gift, that, in some Cases, he
 “pretends to be no more than a com-
 “mon Adviser, ^k *But to the rest speak*
 “*I, not the Lord*; and about such and
 “such a Matter, ^l *I have no Command-*
 “*ment from the Lord, but give my Judg-*
 “*ment only*: Words, that but badly

C 4

“com-

^g 2 Tim. iv. 13. ^h 1 Tim. iv. 13, 15. ⁱ Acts xv
^k 1 Cor. vii. 12. ^l Ver. 25.

“ comport with a Person, who pretend to
 “ have the Spirit of God abiding in him.
 “ And therefore we may safely conclude,
 “ that whatever Encomiums may be
 “ given to the Writers of the Gospel in
 “ other Respects, no implicit Faith can
 “ be due to their Authority, upon the
 “ Account of their *Inspiration*.

Answered, by
 shewing
 from
Scripture
 that the
 Apostles
 were ac-
 tually in-
 spir'd.

That God, who is a Spirit, can speak as intelligibly to the Spirits and Minds of Men, as Men can speak to the Ear, is obvious to our first Reflections on the Divine Attributes ; and that there was some Necessity for God's communicating himself to the Apostles in this manner, the Difficulty of their Province, which was to *preach the Gospel to all Nations, and all Languages*, seems to imply. When *Moses* was sent to *Pharaoh*, and, for fear of the Face of so great a King, was ready to retract, God, to encourage him, gives him the Promise, that ^m *he would be with his Mouth, and with Aaron's Mouth, and would teach them what they should say* : And, in like manner, when our Saviour tells his Disciples, that ⁿ *they should be brought before Governours and Kings for his sake, for a Testimony against them and the Gentiles* ; he bids them *take no thought how,*
 or

^m Exod. iv. 12, 15. ⁿ Matt. x. 18, &c. Mark
 xiii. 9, &c.

or what they should speak, for it shall be given unto you, says he, in the same Hour, what ye ought to say, for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost, or the Spirit of my Father, which speaketh in you. Now if Moses was inspired upon that particular Occasion, and the Apostles, in Cases that were but *personal*, when brought before Magistrates upon Account of their Religion, had Assistances extraordinary imparted to them (as whoever looks into their Defences must certainly acknowledge that they had) there is much more Reasons for the same Gifts and Communications in Matters that were to be of general Use to the Church in all Ages. To the end therefore that we might have no doubt concerning the Doctrines, which the Apostles were to teach, we find our Saviour making them this farther Promise; ° *The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my Name, he shall teach you all Things, and bring all Things to your Remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you, i. e. whatever Doctrines I have commanded you to teach, these he will remind you of continually; and whatever I have omitted teaching you, because you are not yet capable of receiving them, these he will*
instruct

instruct you in : For that this is the true Import of the Promise, we may learn from the ensuing Words ; ^p *I have yet many Things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now ; but when he, the Spirit of Truth, is come, he shall guide you into all Truth, and he shall shew you Things to come :* And from hence we may be assured, ^q that all the Sermons and Discourses of our Lord to his Disciples, recorded in the *Evangelists*, are faithfully delivered by his Apostles, as to the genuine Sense and Import of them, otherwise the Holy Ghost did not bring to their Remembrance all Things, which he had said unto them ; and that, whatever they taught in any of their *Epistles* addressed to the *Christian Churches*, they taught by the Guidance and Direction of the same Spirit, otherwise he did not teach them all Things, nor guide them into all Truth.

And from
the Na-
ture and
End of
their
Wri-
tings.

And indeed considering that ^r the end of these Writings, was to be perpetual Monuments of the Doctrines of Jesus Christ, and a standing Rule of Faith to Christians in all Ages of the World, there was a certain Necessity (for fear that the Churches should fall into Error at

^p Joh. xvi. 12, 13. ^q Vid. *Whitby's* general Preface before St. *Matthew*. ^r Vid. *Du Pin's* Hist. of the Canon.

at any time) that their Authors should be directed and assisted, in the Composition of them, by some infallible Guide. And, accordingly we may observe, that (whatever Conceptions we may have of their Modesty) they are no where ashamed of making open Declarations of their being divinely Inspired. For ^f *I am a Minister of Christ*, says St. Paul, according to the Dispensation of God which is given to me to fulfil, (i. e. fully to Preach,) *the Word of God*; and, ^t *for this Cause thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the Word of God, which ye heard of us, ye received it, not as the Word of Men, but, as it is in Truth, the Word of God*; and therefore, ^u *if any Man be a Prophet or Spiritual, let him acknowledge that the Things I write unto you are the Commandment of the Lord.*

And that this was the acknowledgement of Christians in all Ages from the Beginning, viz. that the Apostles, and other Penmen of the Books of the New Testament, were assisted in their Writing, as well as in their Preaching, by the Spirit of God, is evident from innumerable Passages in the *earliest Fathers*, and the constant ^{*} *Practice* of the Church, in

^f Col. i. 25. ^t 1 Thess. ii. 13. ^u 1 Cor. xiv. 35.
^z Vid. *Whitby's* general Preface.

in reading these Writings on the Lord's Day, for the Instruction of the People; in proving all their Doctrines, and confuting Hereticks from their Authority; and in esteeming such Persons, as denied their Inspiration, no better than *Infidels*: for *what Wickedness is this*, [†] says an antient Author, *either they believe not the Holy Scriptures to be divinely Inspired, and then they are Infidels; or they pretend to be wiser than the Holy Ghost, and then they are mad and possessed?*

Now if Persons so near the Times of the Apostles, that some of them either conversed with them, or were acquainted with their immediate Successors; if the Churches, which received these Writings from the very Hands of the Apostles, and kept still the *Original* or *Authentick* Copies of them, did so unquestionably receive them as inspired Writings, and look upon them as the Rule and Pillar of their Faith; if they read them, together with those Writings of the Prophets, which on all Hands were acknowledged to be the Word of God, proved from them all the Doctrines of the Christian Faith, received them as the perfect Rule of Christian Duty, confuted all Heresies and erroneous Doctrines from them, and represented those as Infidels,

[†] Vid. *Whitby's* general Preface. pag. 14.

Infidels, who questioned or denied their Inspiration from the Holy Ghost ; they doubtless were well assured that, *as such*, they were delivered to them by the Apostles and other sacred Penmen : and if this was Matter of Fact, what Reason have we, in these latter Ages, to call in Question what was universally acknowledged by those, who liv'd in the very Age, wherein the Books were written, and sent to the Churches of Christ ?

We readily own indeed, that, in the *E-* Their
wangelical Writings, there is not that Ele- Stile and
 gance of Stile, or Accuracy of Method, Method
 which may be observed in some *humane* vindica-
 Compositions ; but then it ought to be
 considered, that, as ² too great a Nice-
 ness about these Matters is an Argu-
 ment of a little Genius, and an Employ
 unbecoming the Dignity of the Spirit of
 God ; so the Apostle has given us a ve-
 ry good Reason, why least of all it
 should have found a Place in such
 Scriptures, as were designed for the
 Rule of our Faith : ^a *And I, Brethren,*
when I came to you, came not with Ex-
cellency of Speech, or of Wisdom, decla-
ring unto you the Testimony of God ; for I
determined not to know any Thing among
you,

^a *Jenkin's Reasonableness*, Vol. 2. ^b 1 Cor. ii.
 1, &c.

you, but Jesus Christ and him Crucified; and my Speech and my Preaching was, not with enticing Words of Man's Wisdom, but in Demonstration of the Spirit and of Power, that your Faith should not stand in the Wisdom of Men, but in the Power of God. ^b Strains of Rhetorick, whereby the Passions are raised to a great Height, are some times necessary to gain a present Point, and carry a Cause by a violent and sudden Transport, before Reason can interpose: But since Religion was to be propounded upon reasonable Motives, there was no need for any Art of this kind, when the Evidence of the Miracles, by which it was established (here called *the Demonstration of the Spirit and of Power*) afforded so many other more certain and convincing means of Persuasion. *It cannot be denied however (as a ^c learned Critick has declared) but that St. Paul, in some kind, and upon some Subjects, is as eloquent as ever Man was, not inferior to Demosthenes, (in whose Writings he supposes him to have been very conversant,) or Æschines, or any other Ancient the most admired.* Tho' therefore God, in Condescension to the Infirmities of Men, has been pleased to convey some
Parts

^b *Jenkin's Reasonableness*, Vol. 2. ^c *Merc. Casaub.* of Enth. c. 4.

Parts of the Holy Scriptures to us, in such a Stile and Method, as, for its own sake, is greatly to be esteemed and admired; yet it was highly requisite, that other Parts of it should have the bare Force and Evidence of Truth only to convince Mankind; that thereby it might appear, that the Propagation of our Religion was owing, not to any Arts of humane Eloquence, but to its own intrinsick Worth and Excellency.

But there is another way of accounting for the want of Elegance, as well as Uniformity, in the Stile and Method of the Evangelical Writers, and that is by supposing, that, tho' the Spirit of God took Care to direct and over-rule them all along, so as to make it impossible for them to record any thing, but what was consonant to Truth, and expressive of his meaning; yet he might nevertheless leave them to their own Words and Manner of Expression, which, considering the difference of their Parts and Education, must necessarily occasion a great variety of Stile, and sometimes *Solæcisms* or *Confusion* of Method in their Compositions: ^d which *Solæcisms*, if they were but expressive of their meaning, were, in that respect, as valuable, as the greatest Propriety of Lan-

^d *Jenkin's Reasonableness*, Vol. 2.

Language; and which *Confusion* the Holy Spirit might the rather allow of, because it might be of use to prevent the Scriptures being corrupted or falsified, as they might have been, if either their *historical* Part had been digested into *Diaries* or *Annals*, or their *preceptive* Part reduced to several distinct Heads, and placed according to the Rules of Art.

The Extent and Measure of their Inspiration.

In short, the Extent and Measure of the Inspiration of these holy Penmen seems to be stated, according to the Subject they were inditing, whether it was Matter of *Fact*, Matter of *Reason*, or Matter of *Revelation*. * If they were inditing Matters of *Fact*, their Memories were then assisted and confirmed, so as to enable them to relate what was really done, though they might not perhaps all relate it in the same Order of Time. If inditing Matters of *Discourse*, and reasoning either from their own natural Notions, or some antecedent Revelation, their Understandings were enlightened, and their Judgments strengthened: In both these Cases, they had always the use of their Faculties, and seem to be left to their own Words, though under the infallible Conduct and Direction of the Holy Ghost. But if they

* *Whitby's general Preface.*

they were inditing Things of an higher Nature, which were above their Faculties, and of which they could have no Knowledge but by *Revelation*; it seems most reasonable to believe (as the best expedient to secure the Church in all Ages from Errors) that not only the *Things*, but the *Words* likewise, wherein they were exprest, were immediately suggested to their Minds; for so St. *Paul* seems to declare, when he tells us, that ^f *they spake the Things which were given them of God, in the Words, which the Holy Ghost taught them.*

But though the measure of Inspiration, communicated to the sacred Penmen, extended thus far; yet it can be no Prejudice to the Authority of their Writings, to suppose, that it was not *habitual*; and continually residing in them; and therefore St. *Paul* might very well tell us of some Things, about which *he had no command*, wherein he ^g *gave his Judgment and Advice only*, and so distinguish between what *he himself spake*, and what *the Lord spake*: That it was not communicated *all at once*, but at such Times, in such Measures, and upon such Occasions, as were most conducive to the Edification of the Church; and therefore St. *Peter* might,

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without

The Restrictions and Limitations of it.

^f 1 Cor. ii. 12, 13.

^g 2 Cor. vii. 25.

without blame, be ignorant of the Call of the *Gentiles* into the Covenant of Grace, ^h *A Mystery* (as St. Paul speaks) which, in other Ages, was not made known unto the Sons of Men, that the *Gentiles* should be *Fellow-Heirs*, and of the same Body, and Partakers of his Promise in Christ by the Gospel: That it did not debar the Writers from making use of the common and received Forms of Speech; and therefore, when we find them expressing themselves in indefinite Terms, 'tis not because they were doubtful or uncertain in the Particulars so expressed, but purely in Compliance to the general Custom ⁱ of omitting *Fracti-
ons*, and inserting *whole* Numbers only, when an Author finds it not material to his purpose to insist upon every little Circumstance: That it did not restrain them from any Instances of Civility and Respect, and therefore the Salutations of St. Paul to particular Persons, at the End of his Epistles, might not only be of this Nature; but as they included his Benediction likewise (which was the Exercise of his *apostolick* Office in one great Branch of it) might be directed by God, in order to revive their Spirits, and encourage them to Perseverance under the Trials and Afflictions, that were

^h Eph. iii. 3, &c. ⁱ Jenkin's Reason. Vol. 2.

were then upon them: That it did not exempt them from *personal Faults* and Failings, ^k *being Men of the like Passions* with us, and ^l *having this Treasure in Earthen Vessels*; and therefore no wonder if St. Peter, fearful of offending the *Jewish Converts*, who were numerous at *Antioch*, ran into a shameful Diffimulation, ^m *walking not uprightly, according to the Truth of the Gospel*, for which St. Paul ⁿ *withstood him to the Face, because he was to be blam'd*: That it did not exclude the use of humane Means for the Advancement of their Knowledge; which gives us the Reason, why St. Paul advises *Timothy*, a Man extraordinarily endued with the Gifts of the Spirit, and mark'd out by *Prophecy*, as one who should prove Eminent in the Work of the Ministry, to give *Attendance to Reading*, &c. and why St. Paul himself, who could boast of Visions and Revelations beyond all the Apostles, writes to the same *Timothy*, to bring him his ^o *Book-Case* (for

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^k Acts xiv. 25. ^l 2 Cor. iv. 7. ^m Gal. ii. 14. ⁿ Ver. 11.

^o I am very sensible that in our Translation we call it a *Cloak*, but it may as well be interpreted a *Book-Case* or *Scriptore*. *Phavorinus* is of Opinion that it signifies a folded Vellum or Parchment, and therefore Dr. *Hammond* thinks it all one with the *μεμβραναι* mention'd afterwards, because the *μαλιστα*, but more especially seems to denote something mention'd before. *Hammond* in *Locum*.

so the Word *παράδοσις* should be rendered) his *Books*, and his *Parchments*, or Common-place-book ; because he wanted to make use of them, as never imagining, that the *Abundance* of his spiritual Gifts superseded all necessity to Study : And, lastly, that it did not vacate the Necessity of the Apostles convening and consulting together in Matters of great Importance to the Church ; for though the single Authority of any one, in some Cases, might be *decisive*, yet since (as they themselves own) they did but ^p *know in Part, and Prophecy in Part*, who can doubt, but that, in Conjunction, they might communicate Light to each other, and what their whole College did determine, would come with greater Evidence of its being the Will of God, than what was deliver'd by one Apostle only ? Not to say, that this *Synod* at *Jerusalem* might be design'd by the Spirit, ^q to be an *Example* and Precedent to the Church in future Ages, to determine Controversies by the Authority of *Councils*.

Which
solves all
Difficul-
ties.

But now, tho' the Gift of Inspiration, imparted to the Apostles and Evangelists, was not permanent and habitual, but gradual only and occasional ; did not supersede the common ways of Speech,

^p 1 Cor. xiii. 9. ^q *Jenkin's Reason*. Vol. 2.

Speech, nor the usual Forms of Civility ; did not exempt them from personal Faults and Failings ; did not exclude them from the ordinary Means of acquiring Knowledge, nor vacate the Necessity of their meeting together for the Decision of Controversies ; yet this Effect it certainly had, that it secur'd them, not only from all gross Errors in Points of Doctrine, but from all Inconsistences, and slips of Memory likewise, in Matters of an inferior Nature. And therefore may we observe, that, tho' there really is a difference between *St. Matthew* and *St. Luke*, in the Genealogies, they give us of our blessed Saviour, and, as one would think at first Sight, a manifest Mistake on one Side or other ; yet the Design of the two Evangelists, in their respective Deductions, is far from being the same : that *St. Matthew* intends only to set down his *Political* or Royal Pedegree, by which he had a Right to the Crown of the *Jews* ; whereas *St. Luke* shews his natural Descent through the several Successions of those, from whom he took *Flesh and Blood*. And accordingly we find *St. Matthew* beginning his Reckoning only from *Abraham*, to whom *the first Promise of the Kingdom was made* ; but *St. Luke* runs his Line up

St. Matthew and St. Luke reconciled.

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to

to *Adam*, the first Head and Fountain of humane Nature; which plainly shews that the one deduc'd only his Title to the Crown, the other the natural Descent of his Humanity.

This, in a great Measure, may serve as a Key to unlock the chief Difficulties in our Saviour's Pedegree: But perhaps Interpreters might save themselves some Trouble by saying, that *St. Matthew* (concerning whom the main Dispute is) recites it, as he found it in the *authentic Copies* of the *Jews*; who doubtless had preserv'd some known and approv'd Genealogy of their Descent from *Abraham*, the Father of their Nation, in whom they so much gloried, and from whose Loins they expected the promised *Messias*: And that, since the *Jews*, who liv'd in the Time, when the Gospels were publish'd (tho' exactly curious in Things of this Nature, and highly incens'd against Christ and Christianity) never once attempted to invalidate the Account, which the Evangelists give us, this seems to be a sufficient Proof, that these Genealogies, when first they came abroad, were neither thought erroneous nor inconsistent, but agreeable to the publick Records, then in Use; and that, if any Difficulties now arise

: *Vid. Kidder's Demonst. upon the Subject.*

arise in them, they are not to be attributed to any real and intrinsick Cause, but accidentally to the Ignorance of Interpreters, for want of proper Helps, at this Distance of Time, to enable them to explain them.

We readily agree indeed, that, when St. *Matthew* tells us of our Blessed Saviour, ^{Matt. i. 23, explained.} *He came and dwelt in a City called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Prophets,* HE SHALL BE CALLED A NAZARENE, there is no such Passage, as *he shall be called a Nazarene*, to be met with in any of the Prophets that we know of; but when it is consider'd, that, *to be called*, (according to the Hebrew manner of Speaking,) is the same thing as *to be a Nazarene*; the Prophecy (be it where it will) is properly answer'd, if the Sense of the *Thing* be but fulfill'd, by our Saviour's becoming, what we are to understand by, a *Nazarene*.

Now there are two ways, which Annotators observe, of deriving this Appellation; the first is from the Word *Netzar*, which signifies a *Branch*: And hereupon St. *Matthew* might have the Prophet *Isaiah* in his Thoughts, where, without all Controversy, he

D 4

describes

describes the Person of the Messiah ;
^{*} *There shall come a Rod out of Jesse, and
 a Branch shall grow out of his Roots ;*
 and our Saviour's dwelling at *Nazareth*
 might give occasion to the Evangelist's
 calling him a *Nazarene*, or an Inhabi-
 tant of *Netzar* [†] (for so the Place was
 called in *Hebrew*) which had so great
 an Affinity to the Character, which the
 Prophet had given him.

The other way of deriving the Ap-
 pellation is from the Word *Nazir*,
 which signifies a *separate Person*, in
 which Sense *Joseph* is said to be [‡] *sepa-
 rate from his Brethren*, as being despis'd
 and rejected by them. Now the Pro-
 phet *Isaiab*, speaking of the Messiah,
 gives us this Description of his State
 and Condition ; ^a *He is despised and
 neglected of Men, a Man of Sorrow, and
 acquainted with Grief, and we hid, as
 it were, our Faces from him ;* and what
 might contribute to his farther Re-
 proach, was his Living at *Nazareth*, a
 mean Place, situate in the obscure
 Country of *Galilee*, and inhabited with
 Fishermen, and People of so low a
 Rank, that it passed into a Kind of
 Proverb, ^b *Can any good thing come out
 of*

^{*} Isa. ix. 1.

[†] Vid. Bp. Chandler's Defence.

[‡] Exod. xlix. 29.

^a Isa. liii. 3.

^b John i. 46.

of Nazareth? Thus, which way soever we deduce the Word, we find such plain Footsteps of it in the Prophets, that the Evangelist cannot be charg'd with any Misapplication of Scripture, especially considering what a * *Jewish* Commentator tells us, " That the Prophets do frequently employ equivocal and metaphorical Words, with Intent not to signify the Thing, which is obvious in their first Sense, but what is to be collected from another Etymology and Derivation of them.

We readily grant again, that, according to our present Copies, there is a Passage in St. *Matthew*, quoted under the Name of *Jeremiah*, tho' it is only to be found in the Prophet *Zechary*: But whoever considers that St. *Matthew's* manner is, not to name any particular Prophet, when he makes his Citations; ^c and that both the *Persick* and *Syriack* Versions have no name, but barely mention the Prophet, will be apt to imagine that the Name of *Jeremiah* was not *originally* there, but has since crept into the Text of the Gospel. Or, granting that it was originally in it, yet

Matt.
xxvii. 9.
clear'd.

* Maim. Mar. Neboch. 11. 29. ^c Vid. Kidder's Demonst. Part 2.

yet still we may suppose(^d with St. *Jerom*) that the Words of the Prophecy were written in some *Apocryphal* Book of *Jeremiah*, which St. *Matthew* might, with good Authority quote, or rather, that the *ninth*, and some following Chapters in *Zechary's* Prophecy were in Reality written by *Jeremiah*, because there are several Things contained in them, such as ^e the Fate of *Gaza* and *Askelon*, the ^f Downfal of the Pride of *Assyria*, and the Departure of the Sceptre of *Egypt*, &c. ^g which agree very well with *Jeremiah's* Time, but not at all with that of *Zechary*; and, consequently, that St. *Matthew* made no Blunder, when he cited the Name of *Jeremiah* for what was properly written by him, though, in the present Disposition of the prophetical Books, it commonly goes under another's Name.

That there are several Books expressly cited in the *Old Testament*, of which we have now nothing remaining, is obvious to every Reader; * and that, in the

^d He tells us that he read the very Words here quoted in an *Hebrew* Volume, communicated to him by a *Jew* of the *Nazarene* Sect, being an *Apocryphal* Work of *Jeremiah*. *Kidder*, *ibid*.

^e *Zech.* ix. 5. ^f *Ibid.* Ch. x. 11. ^g *Vid. Kidder*, *ibid*.

* *Clarke's* Evidence of Natural and Revealed Religion.

the Books, which remain, there should sometimes, for want of Infallibility in Transcribers, happen Omissions and Transpositions, is no more than may be expected. What Wonder is it then, if, among the many Texts, cited in the *New* Testament out of the Old, *one* or *two* should now not be found in our present Copies; and that *some others* should be read *differently* in the *Old* Testament from the Citations of the same Texts recorded in the *New*? Or how does this at all affect the Authority of *either*; when much the greatest Part of the Texts cited agrees perfectly, either in Words or in Sense, and the whole Series, Harmony, Connexion, and Uniformity of both, compared with the System of *natural* and *moral* Truths, and with the History of the World, and the State of Nations, through a long Succession of Ages, from the Days of *Moses* to this present time, shew, that the Books are not the result of Random and *Enthusiastick* Imaginations, as some pretend, but of long Foresight and deep Design.

And now to Sum up what has been said: If the Declarations of the *Evan-*gelical Authors themselves, or the acknowledgment of their Cotemporaries and immediate Successors; if the Reason

A Summary of the whole.

son and End of their committing their Doctrines to writing, which were to be an unerring Rule of Faith to all Ages; and if, to make them so, a necessity there was of some uncommon Assistance, be Considerations of any Moment; then is the Inspiration of these sacred Penmen built upon a good Foundation: And, though the Extent and Measure of it may not improperly fall under some Restrictions, (which solve all the Difficulties, that can be alledg'd against it) yet was it certainly such, as secur'd them from the Danger of falling into Errors in any Points of Doctrine, from ^h *walking in Craftiness* (as one of them expresses it) or *from handling the Word of God deceitfully, that, by Manifestation of the Truth, they might commend themselves to every Man's Conscience in the Sight of God.*

2 Cor. iv. 2.

S E C T.



S E C T. III.

Of the Canon of the New Testament.

“ BUT how well qualified and ^{The Ob-}
 “ assisted soever these Evangeli- ^{jection.}
 “ cal Penmen might be, yet by what
 “ means shall we be able to know, whe-
 “ ther one authentick Copy of all they
 “ wrote has ever descended to us, since
 “ the Transmutations in them have been
 “ so many, and their Genuineness so of-
 “ ten disputed; ⁱ since some Pieces,
 “ which were at first received, were
 “ afterwards rejected, as *spurious*, and
 “ others, which were at first rejected,
 “ were afterwards receiv’d as *canonical*,
 “ and Matters, in short, were reduc’d
 “ to such uncertainty, that there was
 “ no single Book of the New Testa-
 “ ment, which was not refus’d by some
 “ of the *Ancients*, as unjustly father’d
 “ upon the *Apostles*? ^k Several of these
 “ Books, we cannot but acknowledge,
 “ are

ⁱ Vid. Toland’s Amyntor. ^k Vid. The Grounds
 and Reasons of the Christ. Religion.

“ are piously written, and upon Sub-
 “ jects of great Concern to Salvation,
 “ and were therefore, in Process of Time,
 “ made *canonical* by the Church; but
 “ then this was plainly an accidental
 “ Event, which befel those Books gra-
 “ dually, after long Disputes about
 “ their Authority, and might have be-
 “ fallen other pious Books, which,
 “ though deem’d Scripture, and declar’d
 “ *canonical* by the Ancients, have been
 “ since rejected, as Suppositious and
 “ Apocryphal. The Epistles of *Bar-*
 “ *nabas*, for Instance, the Pastor of
 “ *Hermas*, the Epistles of *Polycarp*,
 “ of *Clemens*, of *Ignatius*, were all
 “ held in great Esteem, and publickly
 “ read in the primitive Church, whilst
 “ the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, that of
 “ *James* the second of *Peter*, the se-
 “ cond and third of *John*, &c. were,
 “ for a long time, universally rejected;
 “ and now what Reason can be given,
 “ why they should have such different
 “ Fates. Why the former should be
 “ postpon’d, and the latter received
 “ with so much Veneration; but the
 “ pure Caprice of those, who had the
 “ Establishment of the present Canon,
 “ and who were many hundred Years
 “ wrangling and disputing, before they
 “ could adjust this mighty Matter. So
 “ that,

“ that, upon the whole, we, who live
 “ at this Distance of Time, must labour
 “ under great Uncertainty, and have
 “ some Reason to doubt, whether, af-
 “ ter so many Changes and Chances,
 “ we have one Word of the Apostles
 “ genuine Works, in the whole New
 “ Testament.

The Word *Canon* is originally *Greek*, Answer-
 and, in its common Acceptation, signi- ed,
 fies a *Rule*; and therefore when we em-
 ploy it in an *Ecclesiastical* Sense, we un-
 derstand by the *Canon*, or *Canonical*
 Books, those Books, which, confin'd
 to a certain Number, were design'd by
 God to be the *Rule* of our Faith and
 Practice.

That the primitive *Christians* had By shew-
 sufficient Means and Opportunities to ing, that
 distinguish the *genuine* and inspir'd Wri- the pri-
 tings, from what were *Apochryphal* or mitive
Spurious, no one can doubt; who Christi-
 considers, that the original Writings of the- ans had
 Apostles themselves (whose Hands they sufficient
 were not unacquainted with) were Opportu-
 nities of
 their Custody; that though the Apostles knowing
 wrote to whole Churches, yet particu- the *ge-
 nuine*
 lar Men are frequently nam'd in their Books of
 Epistles, which was a great means to as- the New
 certain their Authority; that no sooner Testa-
 ment.
 were

were these Epistles sent (¹ as is plain in the Case of *St. Paul's*) to particular Churches, but they were publish'd and read, with other sacred Scriptures, in their open Assemblies; that Copies authentically attested were immediately taken of them, sufficient to answer the Number of the Churches and Church-Officers, which the Apostles had every where settled; and (what is more than all) that at this time, there still remained the miraculous Gift ^m of *discerning Spirits*, whereby Persons, who were endued with it, were enabled to distinguish true Revelation from Impositions.

That the
Canon of
the New
Testa-
ment was
settled by
St. John.

'Tis reasonable to suppose therefore, that, during this Period of Time, wherein the Helps and Advantages attending the Church were so many, God should provide himself with a proper Instrument, to settle and determine the Rule of our Faith, and thereby preserve the *Christian* World from all future Uncertainty. And, accordingly, some have observ'd, that *St. John*, who wrote his Gospel and Epistles against those Hereticks chiefly, who were the most notorious Forgers of spurious, and corrupters of the true Books of the Scripture, had his Life prolong'd by Provi-

¹ Col. iv. 16. 2 Pet. iii. 16. ^m 1 Cor. xii. 10.

Providence, that he might be able both to vindicate and compleat the whole *Canon* thereof. 'Tis certain from *Eusebius*, that he revised the three Gospels, before he wrote his own; and *Photius* tells us another Circumstance, *viz.* That the *Versions* of the Gospels were approv'd by him, as well as the *Originals*; nor can we doubt, but that, in so long a Life, he had seen the Works of the rest of the Apostles, and given them his Approbation: As what indeed could be more worthy his Care, or more necessary at that Juncture, than that he should ascertain the Authority of those Writings, which were to be the Churches great Preservative against those *Hereses*, which, even then, became too numerous, and which, he could not but foresee, would occasion no small Scandal and Disturbance in future Ages?

What gives a farther Confirmation of this Opinion is the Testimony of the same *Eusebius*, who, in his *Ecclesiastical History* tells us, that, in the beginning of the second Century, about the Time of St. *John's* Death, or immediately after it, there were great Numbers of Persons, Disciples of the Apostles, who travell'd over the World, building up
This prov'd from Tertullian, Irenaeus, and the Confession of Eusebius.
E Churches,

Churches, where the Apostles had before laid the Foundation, and preaching the Faith of Christ in Places, that had never heard of it before; who carried the Copies of the Gospels to all the Churches, whither they went, and, not improbably, took along with them other Parts of the New Testament besides, because they were own'd and admitted every where soon after. ° *Ter-tullian*, who flourish'd at the end of the second Century, tells us expressly, that *the Law and the Prophets, the Gospels and apostolick Writings, were the Books, from whence we were to learn our Faith*; and, that we may know what he meant by *apostolick Writings*, he appeals, as occasion offers, not only to the four Gospels, but to the Acts of the Apostles, to all the Epistles of *St. Paul*, (except that to the *Hebrews*,) to the first of *St. Peter*, and the first of *St. John*, as the Writings of the Persons, to whom they are ascribed. Nay, *Irenæus*, † who liv'd before him, and convers'd (as himself tells us) with *Polycarp*, and others, that had been instructed by the Apostles, and immediate Disciples of our Lord, mentions the *Code* of the New Testament, as well as of the Old, and calls

° De Præscrip. Heret. c. 36. † Vid. *Richardson's* Canon of the New Testament vindicated.

calls the one, as well as the other, *the Oracles of God, and Writings dictated by his Word and Spirit.* And what wonder indeed, if the first Fathers of the Church did so, when we find the greatest Adversaries of the Christian Name, even ^a *Julian* and ^r *Celsus*, acknowledging their Genuineness, by quoting their Words, and referring us to them upon all Occasions.

We readily grant indeed, that the Authority of the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, the second of St. *Peter*, the second and third of St. *John*, and the Epistles of St. *James*, and St. *Jude*, and of the Book of the *Revelation*, were, at first, doubted of; but for this many good Reasons may be alledg'd. The Epistle to the *Hebrews* had no Name prefix'd to it, which St. *Paul*, out of a Principle of Modesty, might do, as not seeming to assume the Office of an *Apostle to the Hebrews*, which was St. *Peter's* immediate Province, but for this Reason it went under some Suspicion of not being his. The second Epistle of St. *Peter* was thought to differ in Stile from the first; that of St. *James*, to maintain the Doctrine of *Faith* and good Works, contrary to St. *Paul* to the *Romans*; and

Why
some
Books
were at
first ques-
tion'd.

E 2

that

^a *Vid.* Cyril Alex. contra *Jul.* L. 10. ^r *Just.* Mart. Dial.

that of St. *Jude* to quote a Passage from an *Apocryphal* Book, (call'd the *Apocalypsis* of *Enoch*,) for which Causes they might, for some time, be rejected. The second and third Epistles of St. *John* were too much levelled against the Hereticks of that Age, not to provoke their Endeavours to hinder their Reception; and the Book of *Revelation* contain'd some Things, which aim'd so directly at *Rome* and the *Empire*, that it might not be thought prudent, at first, to admit it into the Canon.

Besides this, [†] some of these Books were so short, and others so obscure, as made it improper for them to be read in publick Assemblies, which, together with their being omitted in the *Syriack Version*, in those Days, in great Vogue and Esteem, might give some particular Persons (for they were never call'd in Question by any *Council*) an Umbrage of Suspicion; which the Distance of the Places, whereunto they were sent, making their Transmission to other Churches, (especially in times of Persecution,) extremely difficult, might be a means to improve. But, even while they lay under this Censure from particular Persons, some of the greatest Names in Antiquity gave them their Sanction. St.

Allow'd
to be ge-
nuine by
some Fa-
thers of
greatest
Note.

[†] *Jenkin's Reasonableness*, Vol. 2.

St. *Paul's* Epistles to the *Hebrews* is mention'd by *Clemens Romanus*, in his first Epistle, which was it self of such Authority, as to be read in the Church. The second of St. *Peter* and that of St. *James* are cited by the same Author, not *verbatim* indeed, but under the Title of a *Prophecy*, because both the Apostles foretel what is to befall those, who live not according to their Exhortations. That of St. *Jude* is ascrib'd to him by *Clemens Alexandrinus*; the second and third of St. *John* by *Irenæus* and *Tertullian*; who, together with *Justin Martyr*, acknowledges his *Revelation* to be genuine.

Nor can it in the least diminish the Credit and Authority of the New Testament, to alledge, that the first Recognition of its controverted Books, was by the Council of *Laodicea*, 330 Years after our Lord's Ascension; ' since it is plain, that the Business of that Council was, to declare, not so much which were the *authentick* Books of Scripture, as which were not: The growth of heretical Books having made it necessary *then*, though not *before*, for the better Information of the People, to distinguish the *true* from the *false*. For that the *true* were known long before this

And admitted into the Canon sooner, than is pretended.

E 3

Council

Council made their Declaration, " is manifest from the 59th Canon, which appoints, that no Books, which were *extra Canonem*, i. e. none, but such as were Canonical, should be read in Christian Assemblies; which title of *Canonical* they had, because they were inserted in the Apostles Canons, and the Apostles Canons, according to the Opinion of the best Criticks, were the Canons of *Councils*, assembled before the Council of *Nice*, because we find them referr'd to in that Council; and were very probably stiled *Apostolical*, because they were made by Men, who liv'd next to the Apostles Days, and who declar'd, in those Canons, what they had received from them.

Their
late Ad-
mission
an Argu-
ment for
them.

But allowing these disputed Books to be of later Admittance, than we have given them, yet the only *just* Inference that we can deduce from thence, is, That since these Books were not *every where* admitted upon their first appearing, this shews that the Church did not proceed rashly and carelessly in the Affair; and since they were *every where* admitted afterward, this shews, that upon Examination, clear Proof and Evidence was found of their *Genuineness*; and accordingly they have ever since been
join'd,

join'd, by Persons of all Sects and Opinions, to the rest of the Books, which we esteem *Canonical*.

We readily grant again, that, in the primitive Times, there were other Books besides the Holy Scriptures, wrote by pious and learned Men, and held in such high Esteem, as to be read in Christian Assemblies; but then we are to consider, that * how justly soever we may value them, yet, upon Enquiry, we shall find, that there is something *Humane*, something of *Infirmity*, something of *Fallibility* in them, which makes them inferior to what is *Apostolical*; that the best approv'd Piece of them all (I mean the Epistle of *Clemens* to the *Corinthians*) was, for many Ages, supposed to be lost, and though, upon its appearing again, the best Criticks thought they had good Reason to pronounce it *Genuine*, yet, they could not be sure, that it was entirely free from Corruption or Interpolation; that though these *Ecclesiastical* Writers (as they were called) were, for some time, read in Churches, yet they were not read as *Canonical Scripture*, but only in the Nature of *Homilies*, and Exhortations to Virtue and Piety; and that in Process of Time, even this Practice came to be laid aside, and no-

The Case
of other
ancient
Books.

E 4

thing

thing allow'd to be read publickly, but what was of undoubted *apostolick* Authority.

The Canon of the New Testament continu'd entire.

This is the true History of the Canon of Scripture, in some of the earliest Times of Christianity : And that it continued the same in succeeding Ages, without any Addition or Mutilation, its being translated into so many Tongues, in the four first Centuries, and dispers'd into so many Hands, in so many different Countries, as well as the Copies of great Antiquity still extant among us, are a convincing Argument ; especially considering, that the several Sects of Christians were, all along, so jealous and watchful over each other, that no spurious Piece could be introduced, or genuine Piece suppress'd, without their Knowledge and Remonstrance ; nor can we imagine, how any Catalogue of Books

Such are the *Cambridge* Copy, in *Greek* and *Latin*, containing the four Gospels, and the Acts of the Apostles ; that in the *French* King's Library, containing *St. Paul's* Epistles ; and that in the Library of the *Benedictines* of *St. Germain's*, all supposed to be above a thousand Years old. The *Alexandrian* Copy is believed to have been written by *Thecla*, above 1300 Years ago ; a *Syriack* Manuscript, in the Library of the Duke of *Florence*, and a *Gothick* Translation, of the four Evangelists, formerly belonging to the Abbey of *Werdin*, are each of them of above a thousand Years Antiquity ; besides many more, which are in private Hands. *Jenkin's Reasonableness*, vol. 2.

Books should be received, (exclusive of all others,) but upon the clearest Evidence and Conviction of their containing the true, and only *authentick* Rule of Faith and Practice.

We acknowledge once more, that the Number of various Lections in the New Testament is far from being small; but then it ought to be considered,

Notwithstanding its various Readings.

² either that most of *these* are of no moment, consisting chiefly of *synonymous* Words, or *expletive* Particles; or, that if they be, they are such apparent *Errata*, as may easily be discover'd and corrected; that there is hardly one Text, which contains any Article of *Faith*, subject to such various *Readings*, as are contrary to sound Doctrine; or that, if there be, there is such a multitude of other Places, wherein the same Doctrines are plainly and undoubtedly taught, that the different *Readings* of one or two Places can be no Prejudice to the constant Tenour of the whole. Considering, then, what a multitude of *Copies* and *Versions* have been made of the New Testament, more certainly than of any other Book extant, instead of wondering at the Differences found among them, which were occasion'd, in a great Measure, by the Ignorance or Negli-

Negligence of the *Translators*, or *Transcribers*, we ought to account it no small Instance of Providence, that it has escap'd, with so inconsiderable Variations, from those Corruptions and Alterations, which are so frequent in *humane* Writings.

A Recapitulation of the whole Answer.

Upon a Review then of what has been said on this Subject, we may resolve our selves in this Question—"What Security, at this Distance of Time, have we, that the true and *authentick* Canon of the New Testament has descended to us?" For if the primitive Christians had sufficient Means and Opportunities of knowing what Books were *Genuine*, or of *apostolick* Writing; if, in the latter End of the first Century, the Canon of the New Testament was settled by St. *John*, a Person every way qualified for that Purpose, and, not long after that, recommended to the Churches every where, and recogniz'd by *Synods* and *Councils*; if these *apostolick* Books were mention'd and recited in the Works of the most ancient Fathers, and acknowledg'd to be such, in the Writings of those, who bore no good Will to the *Christian* Cause; if some few of *these*, whose Pretensions were at first disputed, were allowed to be *Genuine* by the best Judges; were receiv'd
into

into the *Canon* much sooner than is pretended; and suffered no Discredit, but had rather their Authority confirmed, by their *late Admission*; if, after such Admission, they were, all along, appeal'd to, as decisive in Controversies, by Parties of every Denomination, who kept too jealous a Watch upon one another, to suffer any notorious Corruption or Interpolation to affect them; then is the Canon of the New Testament, as it is transmitted to us, *entire*, notwithstanding the great Variety of its *Lections*, which have been occasion'd by the Number of its *Copies* and *Editions*, and which, if carefully look'd into, will be found to make no considerable Alteration in it.

S E C T. IV.

The Evidence of MIRACLES and PROPHECIES compar'd.

“ BUT be the Canon of Scripture The Ob-
 “ never so *entire*, and its Authors jection.
 “ never so *honest*, and never so much
 “ *inspir'd*; yet how shall we know the
 “ Truth of the Christian Religion, and
 “ be

“ be satisfied of its being an Institution
 “ of divine Appointment? The only
 “ Proofs, that you have to offer us, are
 “ the *Completion of Prophecies*, and the
 “ *Gift of working Miracles*; but Mira-
 “ cles alone are far from being a valid
 “ Proof: They may be done by Cheats
 “ and Impostors, by a diabolical as
 “ well as divine Power. * For as, in
 “ *Egypt*, *Jannes* and *Jambres* were
 “ raised up by Satan to contend with
 “ *Moses* in working Miracles, so, in the
 “ primitive Times of Christianity, se-
 “ veral *Conjurers* and *Magicians* were
 “ raised up by him, and withal em-
 “ power’d to work Signs and Wonders
 “ in the Air; to speak diverse Lan-
 “ guages; to foretel Plagues and
 “ Storms; to make Fire come down
 “ from Heaven; to vomit Flames; to
 “ walk and fly in the Air, and cast out
 “ Devils. And all these Things they
 “ did, to confront the Miracles, and in-
 “ validate the Authority of the Apo-
 “ stles, and to confirm this Doctrine,
 “ which is a plain Contradiction of the
 “ Gospel, viz. *That Jesus was not the*
 “ *Christ*. But even, supposing the Mi-
 “ racles true, yet, if they stand alone,
 “ and without the support of Prophe-
 “ sy,

* *Vid.* The Scheme of Literal Prophecy con- sidered.

“ fy, ^b they can never render a Foun-
 “ dation valid, which is in it self inva-
 “ lid ; can never make a false Inference
 “ true ; can never mark out a Messias,
 “ or Jesus for the Messias, if both be
 “ not mark’d out in the Old Testament.
 “ With good Reason therefore might
 “ ^c St. Peter give the Preference to Pro-
 “ phesy, even before the miraculous
 “ Attestation, which he, and two other
 “ Apostles had, of the Mission of Jesus ;
 “ when we find Jesus himself supposing
 “ Prophecies of more weight than Mira-
 “ cles wrought in our Sight, ^d even than
 “ raising the Dead ; and all the other
 “ Apostles, in their Writings and Dis-
 “ courses perpetually arguing from the
 “ Completion of the Prophecies, both
 “ against *Jews* and *Profelytes* : As well
 “ they might ; because Prophecies, de-
 “ liver’d in an inspir’d Book, are, when
 “ fulfill’d, such, as may justly be
 “ deem’d sure and demonstrative Proofs.
 “ But now much Care and Caution is to
 “ be us’d in our examining into these
 “ Matters : For if the Proofs for Christi-
 “ anity from the Old Testament be not
 “ valid ; if the Arguments, founded on
 “ these Books, be not conclusive ; if
 “ the Prophecies, cited from thence, be
 “ not

^b The Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Re-
 ligion. : 2 Pet. i. 18, 19. ^d Luke xvi. 31.

“ not actually fulfill’d, than has Christi-
 “ anity no just Foundation. And yet,
 “ to look into the Writings of the Pro-
 “ phets, and observe in what manner
 “ they are applied by the Apostles and
 “ Evangelists, one must needs conclude,
 “ that they can no otherwise be under-
 “ stood than in *typical, mystical, and*
 “ *allegorical* Sense, which, according
 “ to scholastick Rules, is no Proof at
 “ all; that the Passages, taken out of
 “ the *Old*, and urg’d in the New Testa-
 “ ment, being either not found in the
 “ *Old* Testament, or not urg’d in the
 “ *New*, according to their literal and
 “ obvious Sense, carry no Conviction
 “ along with them; and consequently,
 “ that the Argument from Prophecy for
 “ the Truths of Christianity (tho’ cer-
 “ tainly the best, that Believers have
 “ to produce) is absurd and ridiculous,
 “ and the Religion built thereon a mere
 “ Jest and Delusion.

Answer-
 ed, by
 shewing
 that true
Miracles
 can be
 done by
 God only.

Now in order to state the Difference
 between Miracles and Prophecies as they
 affect the Proof of Christianity, we must
 observe, that a true Miracle is proper-
 ly such an Operation, as exceeds the
ordinary course of Things, and is repug-
 nant to the known Laws of Nature,
 either as to its *subject Matter*, or the
Manner

Manner of its Performance. For though we readily acknowledge that there are Beings in the *spiritual* World, which are able to perform Things far exceeding the power of Men, and therefore apt to beget Wonder and Amazement in us, (of which Nature were all the *Pranks*, recorded of Conjurers and Magicians, in the early Ages of Christianity,) yet, that any *created* Beings, and consequently Agents of a *limited* Power, are capable of working such Miracles, as our Saviour did; are capable of controlling the course of Nature, of supplying Mens natural Defects, of giving Sight to the Blind, Speech to the Dumb, and Life to the Dead (which are Miracles relating to the *subject Matter*) or of doing any of those Things in an Instant, by a Touch, by a Word, at a Distance, and without any kind of outward Means (which are Miracles regarding the *Manner of their Performance*) is a Thing impossible; unless we can suppose that *limited, inferior, and created* Beings, have an equal Power of *creating, controlling, and restoring*, with Almighty God: Which is *Contradiction* enough in all Conscience.

It was upon this Persuasion therefore, *viz.* That *true Miracles are the sole Operations of God*, that the World has all along

Or Persons sent by him.

along agreed to acknowledge and accept of Miracles, as an *authentick* and *indisputable* Testimony, that the Persons, entrusted with such Power, were certainly sent and commissioned by God. To this purpose we find *Pharaoh's Magicians* confessing, that the Miracles which *Moses* and *Aaron* exhibited, were ^e the *Finger of God*; and, in the Controversy between *Elijah* and the Priests of *Baal*, it was readily accepted, as a fair Proposal, that he, ^f *who answered by Fire from Heaven*, should be unanimously served, and worshipped as God. The less Reason, have we then to wonder, that we hear a learned *Ruler* of the *Jews* accosting our Lord in these Words, ^g *Rabbi, we know that thou art a Teacher sent from God, for no Man can do those Miracles, that thou dost, except God be with him*; or that a mean Man, who had been born Blind, should confront the whole Assembly of the *Pharisees* with this one Argument, ^h *Since the World began, was it not heard that any Man opened the Eyes of one, that was born Blind; if this Man were not of God, he could do nothing*; or that our blessed Saviour himself should so frequently appeal to the Miracles he wrought,

^e Exod. viii. 19.

^f 1 Kings xviii. 24, &c.

^g John iii. 2.

^h John ix. 32, 33.

wrought, as proper Testimonies of his divine Mission, ⁱ the Works, which my Father hath given me to finish, ^k the Works which I do in my Father's Name, the same bear Witness of me, that the Father hath sent me: ^l If I do not the Works of my Father, believe me not; but if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the Works, that ye may know and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him.

And indeed, considering the Design of our Saviour's Mission, that he was a Teacher sent from God^m to abolish a Form of Worship, which had incontestibly been established by the Power of Miracles in Moses, and to institute a new Religion, repugnant to the *Wisdom of the World*, in many *mysterious* Doctrines, and abhorrent to the vicious Inclinations of Men, in all its righteous Laws and Precepts; that he was appointed, in short, to destroy the Kingdom of the Devil, and, upon its Ruins, to erect a *Kingdom of Righteousness*; there was an absolute Necessity for him to be invested with a power of working Miracles: Otherwise, his Pretensions to this high Character had been ridiculous, and the *Jews*, with good Reason, might have demanded of him, *Master*; ⁿ we would

Why our Saviour was to work Miracles:

ⁱ John v. 36. ^k John x. 15. ^l John x. 37.
^m *Stillingsfleet's Orig. Sacrae.* p. 172. ⁿ John vi. 53.

would see a Sign from thee, what Sign therefore dost thou do, that we may see and believe? What dost thou Work? But this Demand is effectually silenced, by our Saviour's being able to make the Reply, ° *If I had not done among them the Works, which none other Man did, they had not had Sin, but now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father.*

Miracles
preferable to
Prophe-
sies.

We readily grant, P that the Christian Revelation supposes, and is built upon the Jewish, as to its Foundation; that the Character, which Jesus Christ assumed, was that of the *Messiah*, a Person promised, and delineated in the Law and the Prophets: And accordingly both Christ and his Apostles appeal to these Prophecies, and apply them, as giving Evidence to his Pretensions; and, consequently, the Trial of Christianity is, in effect, put upon this Issue, and unless the Validity of this appeal can be supported, Miracles, exclusive of this Testimony, will not be a sufficient Evidence. But then it ought to be considered, that, when, among the particular Predictions of a Person, promised to the Jews as their *Messias*, it was foretold, that he should ^q *be like unto Moses*, that

° John xv. 24. P Rogers's Necessity of a Divine Revelation. q Deut. xviii.

that [†] *the Spirit of God should rest upon him, that he should [†] open the Eyes of the Blind, and unstop the Ears of the Deaf, and that he should make the Lame leap as an Hart, and the Tongue of the Dumb to sing*; Miracles became then an *essential* Ingredient of his Character, and the surest Test of his being a Prophet sent from God. For supposing the Messias characteriz'd in Scripture in all other Respects, except the Power of working Miracles, any other Person, falling under the common Description of his being of the *Seed of Abraham, of the Tribe of Judah, of the Family of David, and born in Betlehem*, might, with some Dexterity and Address, have so accommodated his Life and Actions to the other Part of the Character, as to deceive even an attentive Judgment. Or, supposing him pretending to the Gift of *Prophecy*, the way to make good his Pretensions must be, either by telling us Things *past*, or foretelling Things to *come*: But now, [†] the Knowledge of Things *past* may be acquir'd by so many other ways, besides Revelation, that though, where we cannot presently account for it, it may surprize us; yet where there is no Concurrence of any

F 2

other

[†] Isa. xi. 2. [†] Isa. xxxv. 5, 6. [†] Rogers's Necessity of a Divine Revelation.

other Proof, it can hardly leave the Mind without some distrust of Imposture ; and though the Prediction of future Events, purely Contingent, is, when fulfill'd, a clear and incontestible Evidence of a *Spirit of Prophecy* ; yet as this affords no present Conviction, the Man must wait, and perhaps a long time, before he can make his Conclusion : Whereas Miracles carry with them a clear, positive, and present Evidence of *the Finger of God*. For when an Action is such, as manifestly exceeds all humane Power, we cannot help acknowledging the Concurrence of some superior invisible Agent ; in which Case, we have nothing to imagine, but either good or evil Spirits : If we suppose *good Spirits*, the Action terminates in God, and is under his special Direction ; if *evil Spirits*, the nature of the Doctrine, it attests, will betray their Character ; and, therefore, when any supernatural Actions are wrought, and the Doctrine attested by them stands free from all such *negative* Objections, as assure us it cannot be from God, we have the utmost Evidence of a Divine Revelation, that can be given us.

In some
Cases a-
lone a suf-
ficient
Evidence.

The Truth is, Miracles *alone*, without any other Testimony, had been a sufficient Proof of our Lord's Commission (as they certainly were in the Case of *Moses*)

Moses) had not several Prophecies describ'd the *Messias* (which Title our Saviour assum'd) under other Marks and Characters ; but, notwithstanding this, " it is not the Application of these Prophecies, which gives Sanction to the Truth of Christianity, but the *Works*, by which Christ proved himself to be *sent of God*, these gave him a right to apply to himself the Prophecies concerning the *Messias* ; and the Marks and Characters of the promised *Messias*, given by the Prophets, were so many Tests, by which his claim was to be tried. Tho' therefore " Miracles can-
 " not render a Foundation valid, which
 " is in it self invalid, and can never
 " mark out a *Messias*, or Jesus for
 " the *Messias*, if both are not mark-
 " ed out in the Old Testament " ; yet they can give a Man a just and undeniable Claim to be received as the promised *Messias*, if the Prophetical Character of the *Messias* be but applicable to him : For this is the Sense of our Saviour's Words, comparing himself with the Baptist, a *burning and shining Light* indeed, but who himself did no Miracles, * *I have a greater Witness than that of John, for the Works*
 F 3 *which*

* *Clarke's* Evidence of Natural and Revealed Religion. ‡ John v. 35, 36.

which my Father hath given me to finish, the same Works that I do, bear Witness of me, that I am the Messias, or, which is all one, that my Father hath sent me.

A Passage
in 2 Pet.
xii. 19.

St. Peter indeed, speaking of our Saviour's Transfiguration on the Mount, and the miraculous Voice from Heaven declaring him to be the *Son of God*, seems to give the Preference to the Evidence of Prophecy, above any other Method of Conviction, *⁊ We have also a more sure Word of Prophecy*, says he, *whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a Light that shineth in a dark Place, until the Day Dawn, and the Day Star arise in your Hearts.* But, whatever the Sense of the Words may be, 'tis obvious ^² that the Apostle never intended to give the Evidence of Prophecy a Superiority to all the other Proofs, we have for the Truth of the Gospel; because he not only compares it to a *Light shining in dark Places*, but tells us expressly, that it is so far from being the *best*, that we are to expect a *better*, being to attend to it no longer, than *until the Day Dawn, and the Day Star arise in our Hearts*: which is a plain Argument that the Apostle never looked upon the *Word of Prophecy* as the best support of the Christian

^¹ 2 Pet. xii. 19.
of Prophecy.

^² Vid. The Use and Intent

stian Faith; for then instead of limiting the time for our attending to it, he would have recommended it to our constant Study and Meditation, as long as Life and Thought remain'd.

To find out the true Sense and Meaning of the Words then, we must observe, that the Design of this *second* Epistle of St. Peter was to support the Hopes and Expectations, which he had raised in the *first*. In the first he had given the Christians, to whom he wrote, (then in a State of severe Trial and Persecution,) Assurance of a speedy Deliverance, ^a *of a Salvation ready to be revealed*, and of that *Honour and great Glory*, which their Afflictions would yield them ^b *at the appearing of Jesus Christ*; and, to justify this Assurance, he reminds them of *that Glory and Power*, which Christ, *the Author and Finisher of their Faith*, had already received, and wherewith he would *return*, to effect their Rescue and Deliverance. This is the main Point, whereon St. Peter, in his first Epistle, has placed the Hopes and Expectations of true Believers; and, to the same purpose, he tells them in the *second*, ^c *We have not followed cunningly devised Fables, when we made known unto you the Power and*

F 4 Coming

^a 1 Pet. i. 5.

^b Ver. 7.

^c 2 Pet. i. 16.

Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. But, because *the coming of Christ* was a future Event, and depended entirely (as to any Knowledge that could be had of it) upon the Authority of Prophecy; he therefore refers them, in ^d both his Epistles, not only to the antient Prophets, but to the inspired Preachers of the Gospel, in order to justify the Hopes he had raised; bidding them *be mindful of the Words, which were spoken before of the Holy Prophets, and of the Commandments of the Apostles of the Lord and Saviour, or (as it is in the former Epistle) of them, who have preached the Gospel unto you, with the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven.*

The Power and Coming of Christ then being the only Point in Question, the Apostle, to evince *that*, produces his own Experience; that he had been an *Eye-witness of his Majesty, and of that Honour and Glory, which he receiv'd, when there came a Voice to him from the excellent Glory, this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* But, because seeing Christ in *Glory and Majesty* on the Mount, did not necessarily infer his returning in the same manner to deliver his Servants, the Apostles, to convince us that he will *so* come, and *so* use his Power,

^d Vid. 1 Pet. i. 10, 12. & 2 Pet. iii. 1, 2.

Power, tells us farther, that *we have also a more sure Word of Prophecy*, i. e. we have the very Word of God (speaking by his Prophets) to whom all Futurity is known, to assure us of the Certainty of this future Event. So that, if, according to this Interpretation, *the Word of Prophecy* relates only to the Coming of Christ, * here is no Pretence to say, that Prophecy is a better Argument for the Truth of the Gospel, than all the Miracles of Christ and his Apostles; because the Truth of the Gospel is not the Point here in Question: And yet, if by this *Word of Prophecy* we are to understand, not merely the Prophecies of the *Old Testament*, but those of the *New* likewise (as it seems highly probable by St. *Peter's* appealing, not only to the ancient Prophets, but also to the Preachers of the Gospel) this, of all others, is a most unhappy Text, for such as are minded to set up ancient Prophecy in Opposition to Gospel-Evidence; since the Prophecy, here intended, is probably it self a Gospel-Evidence, and so far from being superior to *all the Miracles of Christ and his Apostles*, that it owes all his Authority to them.

In

! *Vid.* The Use and Intent of Prophecy.

And another in
Luke xvi.
27, &c.
explain'd
and set
right.

In the Parable of the rich Man and *Lazarus*,^f the rich Man is represented as being in Torments, and desiring of *Abraham* to send *Lazarus*, who is said to be in his Bosom, to his Father's House, to convert his surviving Brethren; whereupon *Abraham* tells him, *They have Moses and the Prophets, let them hear them*: Nay, replied the rich Man, *but if one went to them from the Dead, they will repent*. To which the Patriarch rejoins, *If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the Dead*. But, besides that there is no strict arguing from Parables, where so many Circumstances are ornamental, and thrown in purely to beautify the Narration; the whole Design of the conclusive Words in *this*, is, to shew the sufficiency of a standing Revelation, and the probable Unsuccessfulness of any extraordinary Means to effect the Conversion of those, who have been long habituated to their Sins. But what has this to do with the Evidences of the Gospel, or the pretended Superiority of Prophecy above Miracles, to confirm the Truth of a Divine Revelation? A Man, that is wedded to his Lusts, and intoxicated with Pleasures, may

^f Luke xvi. 27, &c.

may be so far blinded in his Understanding, as to reject all the possible Means of his Reformation ; nay, even upon the Supposition, that some departed Friend of his should appear to him from the Dead in order to reclaim him ; yet, such may his Perverseness be, as to make no serious Reflection upon this important Event, but, on the contrary, fortify himself in Wickedness, by supposing that the Apparition was but an idle Dream, the *Sport* of a wanton Imagination, or the Effect of some *melancholy* Mood, and, to drive out the Thoughts of it, return to his lewd and licentious Courses again. But what Affinity has this to a Man's pretending to come with a Commission from Heaven, in order to establish a new Religion, and (to justify his Pretences) curing all Diseases in an Instant, removing all natural Defects, with a Touch, and even raising the Dead to Life again with a Word speaking. * *Can the Ethiopian change his Skin, or the Leopard his Spots ?* Is the Case of the one : Can God countenance a Lye, or communicate his Power to an Impostor ? Is the Case of the other.

We

* Jer. xiii. 23.

The different manner the Apostles applying to the *Jews* and *Gentiles*,

We allow indeed, that the first Preachers of the *Gospel* made use of the Prophecies of the *Old Testament* in order to convert Men to the *Christian Religion*: But then it is to be observ'd, that the Converts, to whom they made this Application, were *Jews*, who believ'd the Divine Authority of the Prophets, and not *Gentiles*, who had no such Persuasion. * Thus St. Paul, in his Discourse with the *Jews* at *Antioch*, begins with the Call of *Abraham*, and, after a short historical Deduction of Matters from thence to the Time of *David*, he adds, ^b *Of this Man's Seed hath God, according to his Promise, raised unto Israel a Saviour Jesus*: Where we may plainly perceive, that the Apostle's whole Argument rests upon the Authority of the Prophets; whereas the same St. Paul, preaching to the People of *Athens*, argues from quite different Topicks. He says not one Word of the Prophets, to whose Mission and Authority the *Athenians* were perfect Strangers, but begins with declaring to them ⁱ *God, who made the World and all things therein*; than goes on condemning all idolatrous Practices, and assuring them that *God is not worshipped with Mens Hands*,
as

* The Use and Intent of Prophecy. ^b A& xiii.
23. ⁱ Acts xvii. 34, &c.

as though he needed any Thing; next accounts for the *Times of Ignorance*, at which God winked; and so tells them at last, that God *now* expects every Man to *repent*, having appointed *Jesus Christ to be the Judge of all Men*; and, for the Proof of this, he appeals to the Truth of Christ's Resurrection, *whereof he hath given Assurance*, says he, *unto all Men, in that he hath raised him from the Dead*. Now, why the Apostle's Argument upon one and the same Subject, in *Acts* xiii. and xvii, should be so widely different, the only true Reason, that can be given, is, the different Circumstances of the Persons, to whom he deliver'd himself. In *Acts* xiii, he argues professedly with *Jews*, to whom were committed the *Oracles of God*, and who, from these Oracles, were well instructed in the Marks and Characters of the Messiah. It had been highly *absurd* therefore to reason with them upon other Arguments, till he had first convinc'd them by their Prophets, and, having so convinc'd them, it would have been *impertinent*. To them therefore he urges and applies the Authority of the Prophets only. But to the *Athenians*, who knew not the Prophets, or, if they knew them, had no Veneration for them, it had been quite

quite ridiculous to offer Proofs from Prophecy ; and therefore he chuses rather to appeal to the principles of natural Religion, and to the Miracles of the Gospel, the Fame of which had probably, long before, reached to *Athens*, and the Truth of which (they being mere Matters of Fact) was capable of undeniable Evidence and Demonstration.

Why St. Paul and St. Peter might quote the Prophets before the Gentiles.

^k St. Paul indeed, in his Defence both ^l before *Felix* and ^m *Agrippa*, appeals to the Law and the Prophets ; and St. Peter in his Discourse ⁿ before *Cornelius*, urges their Testimony in Confirmation of Christ's Divine Mission. But, when we consider, in St. Paul's Case, that the nature of the Accusation, laid against him, made it necessary for him to appeal to the Old Testament, to which *Felix* and *Agrippa*, having liv'd so long among the *Jews*, could hardly be accounted Strangers ; and that, in St. Peter's Case, the mention he makes of the Prophets to one, who was a *Profelyte* (as *Cornelius* was) worshipping the God of *Israel*, and believing the Scriptures of the *Old Testament*, was no more than proper and seasonable ; we shall hardly be induc'd to think, that these Cases

are

^k Vid. Grounds and Reasons, p. 80, 96. ^l Acts xiv. ^m Acts xvi. ⁿ Acts x.

are any tolerable Exception to the general Rule, which the Apostles had, of applying the Testimony of the Prophets to their *Jewish Converts* only; and (which I may add) of applying them in their obvious and *literal*, not any remote or *mystical* Sense. For had they applied them in this manner, how can we imagine, ° that such a Number of *Jews* of all Degrees, Rulers, Priests, and Scribes of all Sects, Men of Learning, and who, by their Profession and Station, were oblig'd to know the Scriptures, should forsake the Religion they were accustom'd to, upon the Authority of Passages, which, in their plain Meaning, were so far from countenancing, that they openly confronted the new Religion they were to embrace, without any View of worldly Interest, with the certain hazard of their Lives here, and the loss of God's Favour hereafter, in Case of Infincerity.

And that they usually applied them in their plain and obvious Sense only.

Fancy what we will of the Weakness, or *Enthusiasm* of those, who set about converting the *Jews* in the Method of *impertinent Citations*; their Weakness could not make their Proofs strong, nor infuse Credulity into Men
 ‡ perfectly qualified to judge, as having
 the

° Bp. Chandler's Defence of Christianity.

‡ Grounds and Reasons, p. 39.

the Old and New Testament in their Hands: And yet these very Men, after comparing things together, did assent to the Truth of the Apostles Reasoning, and became Converts to Christianity.

In a Word, if the *Jews* understood the Prophecies of the Old Testament in their *plain* and *literal* Sense, and the Apostles, in their Address to them, applied them in a Sense that was *mystical* and *enigmatical*, we cannot see how they could ever have made one Proselyte; being in the same Condition with what St. Paul describes, when he tells us, ¹ that *he, that speaketh in an unknown Tongue* (and why not he, that speaketh in an unknown Meaning) *speaketh to the Air, and becometh a Barbarian to him, that heareth, but understandeth not*. So that, every Jew, converted to the Christian Faith, is to us an implicit Proof of the Apostles applying the ancient Prophecies in a Sense, that was then current and familiar to them.

A Summary of the whole.

And now to look back on what has been said on this Argument. If *real* and true Miracles can be perform'd only by God, or by Persons delegated and commission'd by him; and our blessed Saviour, who was sent to institute a new Religion,

¹ 1 Cor. xiv. 9, 10.

Religion, was, in the Nature of Things, required to shew his *Credentials* by working Miracles: If Miracles, thus wrought, are a more positive and immediate Indication of a divine Concurrence, than either the *Completion* of ancient Prophecies, or the *Prediction* of future Events can possibly be: If neither the Words of St. *Peter*, concerning *the more sure Word of Prophecy*, nor the Words of *Abraham* in the Parable, concerning the standing Revelation of *Moses* and the *Prophets*, need so to be interpreted, as to impair the Worth and Authority of Miracles: If neither St. *Paul*, in his Defence before *Felix* and *Agrippa*, nor St. *Peter*, in his Discourse before *Cornelius*, nor any other of the Apostles, in their endeavours to gain Converts, making constant Use and Application of the Prophecies, to prove Jesus to be the Christ, and Christianity a divine Institution, have exalted them above measure: then will the Evidence of Miracles, upon the Comparison, appear to be *superior*, though the Evidence of Prophecies, it must be own'd, is a very good collateral Proof; especially when applied to the Person or Event, they are to denote, in their natural and most obviuous Signification.



S E C T. V.

Of the right Application of some controverted Prophecies.

The Ob-
jection.

“ BUT why should you talk of
 “ the natural, and most obvious
 “ Sense of Prophecies, when the Mat-
 “ ter of Fact is directly against you :
 “ ^a for look but into *Matthew* (one E-
 “ vangelist for all) and he will tell you,
 “ that *Jesus* was carried into *Egypt*,
 “ from whence he returned, after the
 “ Death of *Herod*, ^b *That it might be*
 “ *fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord*
 “ *by the Prophet, saying, OUT OF EGYPT*
 “ HAVE I CALLED MY SON; which Words
 “ are no where to be found, but in the
 “ Prophet *Hosea*, and yet, according to
 “ their plain and obvious Sense, they
 “ are no Prophecy, but relate to a past
 “ Action, *viz.* the conducting the Chil-
 “ dren of *Israel* out of the Land of *Egypt*.
 “ Again, the same Evangelist, speak-
 “ ing of *John the Baptist*, calls him
 “ ^c *the Elias, that was to come*; wherein
 “ he

^a *Vid.* Grounds and Reasons.
^c *Matt.* xi. 14.

^b *Matt.* ii. 15.

“ he is supposed to refer to these Words
 “ of *Malachi*, ^d *Behold, I will send you*
 “ *Elijah the Prophet, before the coming*
 “ *of the great and terrible Day of the*
 “ *Lord*; which, according to their *lite-*
 “ *ral* Sense, are a Prophecy of *Elijah's*
 “ coming in Person, and could be ful-
 “ filled in *John the Baptist*, no other-
 “ wise, than in a *mystical*. Again, in
 “ the same Evangelist we find Jesus
 “ citing this Prophecy of *Isaiah*, ^e *By*
 “ *hearing ye shall hear, and shall not un-*
 “ *derstand*; and assuring us, that, in
 “ his time, it was fulfilled, in those, to
 “ whom he spake in Parables; though
 “ it is certain, that, according to the
 “ primary Sense, it relates to the obsti-
 “ nate *Jews* only, who lived in the
 “ time of *Isaiah*. Once more, the same
 “ Evangelist, after having given an
 “ Account of the Conception of the
 “ Virgin *Mary*, and of the Birth of
 “ *Jesus*, says, that ^f *all this was done,*
 “ *that it might be fulfilled, which was*
 “ *spoken by the Prophet, saying, Behold*
 “ *a Virgin shall be with Child, and shall*
 “ *bring forth a Son, and they shall call*
 “ *his Name IMMANUEL*; but the
 “ Words, ^g as they stand in *Isaiah* (from
 “ whom they are supposed to be ta-
 “ ken)

G 2

^d Mal. iv. 5. ^e Matt. xiii. 34, 35. ^f Matt. i.
 22, 23. ^g Isa. vii. 14.

“ ken) do, in their obvious and literal
 “ Sense, relate to a *young Woman* in the
 “ Days of *Abaz*, King of *Judah*; as
 “ appears both by the Context and
 “ Reason of the Thing, and can no
 “ otherwise, than in a typical and my-
 “ stical Sense, be applied to the Birth
 “ of *Jesus*. In fine, most of the Pro-
 “ phesies, cited from the *Old Testa-*
 “ ment, by the Authors of the *New*,
 “ do so plainly relate, in their obvious
 “ and primary Sense, to other Mat-
 “ ters, than those, which they are pro-
 “ duced to prove; that, even that re-
 “ markable Passage in the *Pentateuch*,
 “ ^h *A Prophet will the Lord God raise*
 “ *up unto thee, like unto me, to him shall*
 “ *ye hearken*, is supposed, by learned
 “ Men, not to denote *any one* in particular,
 “ but to a Succession of Prophets; and
 “ that famous Prophecy of *Daniel*, urg’d
 “ ⁱ by Christ, as foretelling the Destru-
 “ ction of *Jerusalem*, has been thought
 “ to relate to that Event only, in a se-
 “ condary Sense.

Answer’d
 by sta-
 ting the
 several
 Kinds of
 Prophe-
 sy, as
 some are
 express,

That there are several Texts in the
Old Testament, relating to a particular
 Person, who was to make an extraor-
 dinary Figure in the World, no one can
 doubt, who has read of ^k the *blessed Seed*
 of

^h Deut. xviii. 15, 18.
 xxviii. 14.

ⁱ Matt. xxiv.

^k Gen.

of *Abraham*, of ¹ *the Shiloh* which was to come, of ^m *the Star* out of *Jacob*, of ⁿ *the Prophet* like unto *Moses*, of ^o *David's* righteous Branch, of ^p *the Desire* of all Nations, of ^q *the Messenger* of the Covenant, of ^r *the Messiah* the Prince, of ^s *the Ruler* of *Israel*, whose goings forth have been of old, and whose Name was to be called ^t *Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.* These are Titles of too high a Strain for any mortal Man, and must therefore be reputed *express* Prophecies of the Son of God *incarnate.*

But, as ^u *no Prophecy of the Scripture is of any private Interpretation*, (i. e. the meaning of Prophecies is not, what perhaps the Prophet himself might imagine, in his private Judgment, of the State of Things then present,) *because the Prophecy of old came not by the Will of Man, but holy Men spake, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*; therefore is it reasonable to suppose, that some Prophecies, though they may have reference to a nearer Event, may nevertheless be dictated by the Spirit in such Terms, as make them equally, if not more, applicable to another greater,

And others indirect.

G 3

and

¹ Gen. xlix. 10. ^m Num. xxiv. 17. ⁿ Dent. xviii. 15. ^o Jer. xxiii. 5. ^p Hag. ii. 6. ^q Mal. iii. 1. ^r Dan. ix. 25. ^s Micah v. 2. ^t Isa. ix. 6, 7. ^u 2 Pet. i. 10.

and more distant Event, which the Providence of God might then have in view : And these we may call *indirect* Prophecies.

Some
kinds of
Reason-
ing typi-
cal,

The Analogies * between the *Paschal Lamb*, and *the Lamb slain from the Foundation of the World* ; between the *Egyptian Bondage*, and the *Tyranny of Satan* ; between the *Baptism of the Israelites in the Sea and the Cloud*, and the *Baptism of Christians* ; between the *Passage through the Wilderness*, and through the *present World* ; and between † the *High-Priests entering into the holy Place, every Year, with Blood of others*, and *Christ's once entering, with his own Blood, into Heaven it self, to appear in the Presence of God for us* : These, I say, and innumerable other Analogies between *the Shadows of good Things to come*, and the *heavenly Things themselves*, are abundant Testimonies, that the Apostles many times made use of *typical Reasoning* ; and that, at other times, they applied Texts out of the old Testament purely by the *way of Allusion*, is a Matter too evident to be contested. For, when our Saviour silences the *Scribes*, who were offended at the *Childrens crying Hosanna's to him*, with a Quota-

And o-
thers al-
lusive en-
ly.

* Clarke's Evidence of Natural and Revealed Religion. † Heb. ix. 25.

Quotation out of the *Psalmist*, ^z *Out of the Mouth of Babes and Sucklings hast thou perfected Praise*; when he excuses his Disciples for plucking the Ears of Corn, when they were hungry, on the Sabbath-Day, from the Words of the Prophet, *I will have Mercy and not Sacrifice*; and, in like manner, when St. Paul proves the Christian Ministers right to Maintenance from this Precept in the Law, ^a *Thou shalt not muzzle the Mouth of the Ox that treads out the Corn*; and enforces the Duty of Liberality to the Poor, with a Passage out of the *Jewish History*, ^b *He that gathered much, had nothing over, and he that gathered little, had no lack*; 'tis obvious, that they both meant no more by these Citations, but only to allude to some known Sentence in the Old Testament, in order to strengthen the Argument, or illustrate the Subject, they were upon.

To such as are accustomed only to modern Languages, and understand not the Nature of the *Hebrew* and *Syriack* Speech, it may seem very surprizing, that St. *Matthew* should so frequently introduce his Citations, *that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by the Prophet*: but whoever considers the Idiom

The meaning of St. *Matthew's*, that it might be fulfilled.

G 4

of

^z Matt. xxi. 26. Psal. viii. 2. ^a Deut. xxv. 4.
^b Exod. xvi. 18.

of those Languages, cannot but know, that the Phrase, answering to these Expressions, *that it might be fulfilled*, means no more, than that *hereby was verified*, or that *this Event answered to the Prediction*, or the like. For that no Event can happen merely for the sake of the Prediction, or, (in other Words,) that nothing can be done, properly *for this End*, that a Prophecy may be fulfilled thereby, is very evident; because, on the contrary, the reason why any thing is predicted, always is because the thing was (before that Prediction) appointed to be done. Since the *Jews* then were accustomed to say, that a Passage of Scripture was then *fulfilled*, when any thing happened, that was applicable to it, 'tis no wonder at all, that St. *Matthew*, who himself was a *Jew*, and very probably wrote his Gospel in the *Hebrew* Tongue, for the use of his Countrymen, should naturally fall into their Style and Manner of Expression.

St. *Matthew's* Application of *Hosea* xi. 1.

Now, whoever considers the State of the *Jews* in *Egypt*, their Bondage, and Danger of utter Extinction, by reason of the Decree, that passed for the Destruction of all their Male-Children (had not the Providence of God prevented

vented the Execution of it) will soon perceive the Cause, why *Egypt* is made, in Scripture, the common Figure and Emblem of extreme Danger and imminent Death; and why a Deliverance out of *Egypt* should be applied to every great and surprizing Act of Preservation, where there seem'd to be no visible Means of escape, insomuch that, whenever any Instance of such a watchful and protecting Providence happen'd, it was an usual and proverbial Speech among the *Jews*, (who were wont then, as they are still, to apply Sentences out of Holy Writ to the common Occurrences of Life,) to say, in Scripture Phrase, *Out of Egypt have I called my Son*, or *He hath called him out of Egypt*, i. e. he hath rescued him from the Jaws of Death, or from the like Danger, that the *Israelites* were in, when he brought them out of *Egypt* with an *mighty Hand and a stretched-out Arm*. Since *Joseph* then was ordered to flee into *Egypt*, and to tarry there until *Herod was dead*, for this Reason, because *Herod* sought the young Child's Life; this distinguishing Preservation of *Jesus*, by means of his Retreat, till the Danger was over, will justify the *Evangelist* (even though it had been any other Country, as well as *Egypt*, where-

whereunto he retir'd) in applying to him the proverbial saying, upon that Occasion, *out of Egypt, i. e. out of manifest Danger, have I called my Son.*

Of Mala-
chi iv. 5.

How usual a thing it is for Persons, who resemble others in Qualities, Offices, or Actions, to be describ'd by the Names of those, whom they resemble; no one can be ignorant, who is the least acquainted, either with Scripture Phrase, or the common Forms of Speech. The *Messias* is promis'd by the * *Name of David*, because he was to be a King: *Zadok*, the High-Priest, and his Sons, are recorded by † the Name of *Aaron*, and his Sons, by reason of their Office: And among us 'tis no uncommon thing, to call the rich Man a *Cræsus*, the wise Man a *Solomon*, and the great Warriour a *Cæsar*, an *Alexander*, or the like: And where then, I pray, can the Misapplication be, in our Saviour's calling the *Baptist* by the Name of *Elias*, when, in the Severity of his Life, his Zeal for God's Glory, his boldly rebuking Vice, his suffering Persecution, and doing every thing, he could, to restore the true Spirit of Religion, he so nearly resembled the *Tishbite*?

The

* Ezek. xxxiv. 23, 24. † 1 Chron. vi. 49.

The Resemblance of a contrary Nature, between the *Jews* of old, and those of our Saviour's time, occasion'd him to recite the Words of the Prophet, *by hearing ye shall hear, but shall not understand, &c.* and where, I ask again, is the Incongruity of this? Is any thing more customary, both in Words and Writings, than to apply an ancient Character to a present Sett of Men, if so be their Conduct deserves it? But what if this ancient Character be not given to the *Jews* of *Isaiah's* time only, but to their Posterity likewise? The Words of the Prophet are these; * *Go and tell this People, hear ye indeed, and understand not; and see ye indeed, and perceive not; make the Heart of this People fat, and make their Ears heavy, &c. then said I, Lord, how long? viz. How long shall this Blindness last? And he said, until the Cities be wasted without Inhabitants, and the Houses without Men, and the Land be utterly desolate, and the Lord hath removed Men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the Land; i. e. until some sweeping Destruction and Captivity shall come upon them. And who will affirm, that the Captivity here threatened was not what*

* *Isaiah vi. 9, &c.*

what *Titus* brought upon the *Jews*, a little more than 30 Years after our Saviour's Death? In this Light, our Saviour applies the Prophet's Words with great Propriety to the *Jews* of his time. They were *then* such a perverse hypocritical People, as they were in *Isaiah's* Days. *Isaiah* foretels that they should continue so, till God's final Judgment should over-take them : Our Saviour charges his Generation no farther, then the Prophet did *his*. He told the Duration of their spiritual Blindness ; our Saviour remarks it of the Age he liv'd in ; and, within any part of that Period, as well as in the Beginning of it, it might be pronounc'd with Truth, *This People's Heart is waxed gross, and therein is the Prophecy of Isaiah concerning them fulfill'd.*

And of
Isaiah vii.
14. vindicated.

There is another Passage indeed in the Prophet *Isaiah*, which *St. Matthew* applies to the Birth of *Jesus*, and yet, according to the Context, it seems, at first sight, to have a more immediate Reference to another Event. The History, from whence this Passage is taken, is this. In the Days of *Abaz*, King of *Judah* (and probably in the second or third Year of his Reign) *Rezim*, King of *Syria*, and *Pekah*, King of *Israel*, united their Forces to come against

gainst *Jerusalem*, which put the King and his People in such Consternation, that ^d *their Hearts were moved* (according to the Prophet's Expression) *as the Trees of the Wood are moved with the Wind.* Hereupon *Isaiab* is commanded by God to go and meet *Abaz*, and assure him, that the Design formed against him by the two Confederate Kings should not prosper. But, finding no Credence with the King, the Prophet undertakes to perform whatever Miracle he should ask, in Confirmation of the Truth of what he had promised; which *Abaz* still refusing out of a specious pretence of not being willing *to tempt God*, the Prophet turns from him, and, addressing himself to the Nobles of the Royal Blood, *Hear ye now, O House of David*, says he, *the Lord himself shall give you a Sign; behold a Virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call his Name Immanuel.* Now, ^e supposing *Isaiab* himself could possibly (at the time when he spake these Words) understand them of a Son of his own, or of any Son to be born of a young Woman afterwards, who at the time then present was a Virgin; and that his being stiled *Immanuel*,
meant

^d Isa. vii. 2. ^e *Clarke's Evidence of Natural and Revealed Religion.*

meant nothing more, than, that before the Child was grown up, *Judah* should be *delivered* from the then threatened Incurfions of *Israel* and *Syria*; yet, if afterwards any Person, comparing the folemn Introduction of the Words, with the Promifes repeated to the Houfe of *David* in other Paffages of the Prophets, and with the Character of that illuftrious Perfon, who was to defcend from that Houfe, fhould, in his own Days, find a Son really Born of a *Virgin*, attefted to by numerous Miracles, and, by God's Command, named *Jefus* (which is fynonimous to *Immanuel*, a potent Saviour, or *God with us*) could any Perfon, I fay, poffibly entertain the leaft doubt, whether God, who fent *Ifaiah* to repeat the forecited Words to the Houfe of *David*, did not intend thereby to defcribe, if not *wholly* and *folely*, at leaft *chiefly* and *ultimately* this latter Saviour?

For, not to infift upon the original Word, [*Alma*,] which (as ^f learned Men have obferved) fignifies almoft always a *Virgin untainted by Man*, and which the *Greek* Translators before Chrift (who were not interefted in the Controverfy, and yet knew the Signification of *Hebrew* Words much better, than any

Moderns

^f*Vid.* Kidder's Demoft. Part 2.

Moderns can pretend to) have so render'd in this place ; and not to insist on the Tradition, which prevailed among the *Jews*, not long before our Saviour's appearing, *viz.* that the *Messias* should come into the World in such an extraordinary manner, & that no Man should know whence he was, or (as the *Talmud* expresses it) ^h that his Birth should be like the Dew from the Lord, as Drops from the Grass, expecting not the Labour (or Action) of Men: Not to insist on these Things, I say, (though they make very much for Christ's Title to the Prophecy,) how can we imagine, that, after so pompous an Introduction, and so important a Name, the Prophet should mean no more at last by a *Virgin's conceiving*, than that a young Woman should be with Child. What, does *Isaiah* offer *Abaz* a Miracle, either in the Depth, or in the Height above, and, when he seems to tell the House of *David*, that God, of his own accord, would perform a greater Work than they could ask ; does he sink to a Sign, that Nature produces every Day ? Is that to be called a *Wonder* (which implies an uncommon, surprizing, and supernatural Event) which happens constantly by the

^h John vii. 27.
fence of Christianity.

^h Vid. Bishop Chandler's De-

the ordinary Laws of Generation? How little does such a Birth answer the solemn *Apparatus* which the Prophet uses, to raise their Expectation of some great Matter? ^h *Hear ye, O House of David — Behold the Lord himself will give you a Sign* worthy of himself, and what is it? Why a young married Woman shall be with Child. How ridiculous must such a Discovery make the Prophet, and how highly must it enrage the Audience, to hear a Man, at such a Juncture as this, begin an idle and impertinent Tale, which seems to banter and insult their Misery, rather than administer any Consolation under it.

“ But of what Use or Consolation
 “ could the future Birth of the *Messias*
 “ be to the House of *David* at that
 “ time? ⁱ Or where is the Sense of the
 “ Prophet’s saying, that ^k *before the*
 “ *Child* (to be born seven hundred Years
 “ hence) *shall be able to distinguish be-*
 “ *tween Good and Evil, the Land shall*
 “ *be forsaken of both her Kings?* ” Now
 in Answer to this, it may be observed,
 that, in the beginning of this Passage,
 when God commanded *Isaiah* to go and
 meet *Abaz*, ^l he order’d him to take
 with him his Son *Searjashal*, who was
 then

^h Isa. vii. 11. ⁱ Vid. Grounds and Reasons, p.
 43. ^k Isa. vii. 16. ^l Ver. 3.

then but a Child. Why the Child was to accompany his Father, we can hardly suppose any other Reason, but that he was to be of use, some way or other, to enforce the Prophecy. 'Tis but supposing then, that the Prophet, when he uttered the foregoing Words, pointed at his own Child (for there is no need to refer them to *Immanuel*) who might then either stand by him, or be held in his Arms, and all the difficulty is solved : But then the Comfort, which accrued to the House of *David* from this seasonable Prophecy, was very considerable. For ^m it assured them of the Truth and Veracity of God's Promise, in that he would not suffer them to be destroyed, nor the *Sceptre to depart from Judah*, until the *Messiah* came. It assured them of his Almighty Power, in that he could *create a new thing in the Earth*, by making a *Virgin conceive*, and thereby shew himself able to deliver them out of the Hands of their most potent Enemies ; and it assured them likewise of his peculiar Favour, in that he had decreed the *Messiah* should descend from their Family ; so that the People, to whom he had vouchsafed so high a Dignation, might depend on his

H

Pro-

⁂ *Vid. Kidder's Demonst. Part 2.*

Protection, and, *under the Shadow of his Wings*, think themselves secure.

St. Luke's
Quotation of
Deut.
xviii. 15.

We allow indeed that ⁿ some learned Men have referred that Passage in *Deuteronomy*, where God promises a Prophet *like unto Moses* (and which St. Luke applies to the Person of *Jesus*) sometimes to *Joshua*, and sometimes to a Succession of Prophets in the *Jewish* Church: But the Authority of great Names is of no avail with us, when, upon Examination, it appears, that they are so palpably mistaken. For let us consider the occasion of the Passage: Upon the terrible Appearance, which the Presence of God made on Mount *Horeb*, at the Delivery of the Law, the People's Request to *Moses* was, ^o *Let me not hear again the Voice of the Lord my God, neither let me see this great Fire any more, that I die not*; at which Behaviour God being well pleased, bids *Moses* return them this Promise, *I will raise them up a Prophet, from among their Brethren, like unto thee, and will put my Words in his Mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I command him; and, it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my Words, which he shall speak in my Name, I will require*

ⁿ Grotius and Stillingfleet in particular. ^o Deut. xviii. 16, &c.

quire it of him. Now in order to discover wherein the Similitude between *Moses* and this Prophet was to consist, we must enquire into the Particulars, that distinguished *Moses* from the rest of the Prophets; and, accordingly, we find God himself, ^p upon a small Sedition, that *Aaron* and *Mirjam* were engaging in against him, making this Declaration in his Favour; ^q *If there be a Prophet among you, I the Lord will make my self known unto him in a Vision, and will speak unto him in a Dream; my Servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine House: With him will I speak Mouth to Mouth, even apparently, and not in dark Speeches.* And what he means by speaking apparently, we find explained, when we are told, ^r *That the Lord spake to Moses Face to Face, as a Man speaketh to his Friend.* This was the distinguishing Character of *Moses*, and in this particular, neither *Josbua*, nor any of the succeeding Prophets could pretend to be like unto him. ^s They never saw God's Glorious Presence, nor heard him speak distinctly. He did not converse familiarly with them; but whatever he had to communicate, he did it by way of

H 2 Visions,

^p Numb. xii. ^q Ver. 6, &c. ^r Exod. xxxiii. 11.
^s *Sykes's Essay upon the Truth of the Christian Religion.*

Visions, or Dreams, or by dark and enigmatical Expressions.

'Tis said indeed of *Joshua*, that he *was full of the Spirit of Wisdom, for Moses had laid his Hands upon him, and the Children of Israel hearken'd unto him;* but that the Prophecy is not applicable to him, the following Words declare, *But there arose not a Prophet since in Israel, like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew Face to Face, and as Ezra, (who out-liv'd the latest of them) adds, in all the Signs, and all the Wonders, which the Lord sent him to do.* They had no special Commission, no new Institutes of Religion to publish; nor had they usually any extraordinary Credentials to produce. Their Business, in short, was to explain and inculcate the Law, which *Moses* gave, and even in this 'tis hardly supposable that they were always infallibly directed, because it is said of several of them, that they ^u*erred in Vision, and stumbled in Judgment.* How improper is it then to say, they were *like unto Moses*, and how much more improper would it be to give them this additional Character, *I will put my Words in his Mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him;* which certainly implies an extraordinary

^uDeut. xxxiv. 9, 10. ^uIsa. xxviii. 7.

nary Commission to publish something that was not revealed before.

But now, when it is said of the Blessed Jesus, that he was ^a *a Teacher sent from God, for that no Man could do the Miracles, which he did, except God were with him; that he came* ^v *to declare God, or, which is all one, to reveal a new Religion, which was confirm'd* ^z *by Signs and mighty Wonders; and, to qualify him for this, that* ^a *he was from the Beginning with God, and* ^b *is in the Bosom of the Father:* when it is expressly said, that he is ^c *the Mediator of a new Covenant in his Blood, for the Redemption of the Transgressions of the former Covenant; and,* ^d *as Moses was faithful in all his House as a Servant, for a Testimony of those Things which were to be spoken after, so he, as a Son, was faithful to him, that appointed him, and was counted worthy of more Glory, than Moses, in as much as he, who hath builded the House, hath more Honour than the House:* when all this, I say, is affirmed and verified of Christ, 'tis manifest, that the great Lines of the propheticall Description here under Consideration, in their true and primary Sense, meet only in him, and that, to apply them to any other Person, must

H 3. needs

^a Joh. iii. 2. ^v Joh. i. 18. ^z A&S ii. 22. ^a Joh. i. 1. ^b Ver. 18. ^c Heb. xi. 15. ^d Heb. iii. 2, &c.

needs be a gross Perversion of Scripture.

And our
Saviour's
Quotati-
on of
Dan. ix.
24, &c.
all vindic-
ated.

The Prophecy of *Daniel* indeed, as it depends upon the Computation of a particular Period of Time, is somewhat obscure, and requires a competent Skill in History to clear it up: But then there are certain Truths, contained in it, which are plain and obvious to the meanest Capacity. The Words of the Prophet are these, *Seventy Weeks are determin'd upon thy People, and upon thy Holy City, to finish the Transgression, and to make an end of Sins, and to make Reconciliation for Iniquity, and to bring in everlasting Righteousness, and to seal of the Vision and Prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the Commandment to build Jerusalem again, unto the Messiah the Prince, shall be seven Weeks; and threescore and two Weeks, the Street shall be built again, and the Walls, even in troublesome Times. And after threescore and two Weeks shall the Messiah be cut off, but not for himself; and the People of the Prince, that shall come, shall destroy the City, and the Sanctuary, and the end thereof shall be with a Flood, and at the End of the War Desolations are determin'd. And he shall confirm*

confirm the Covenant with many for one Week, and, in the midst of the Week, he shall cause the Sacrifice and the Oblation to cease, even until the Consummation, and that determin'd shall be poured upon the desolate.

Now, from the very Letter of the Prophecy 'tis obvious, 1st. That a *Messias, the Prince* (be he who he will) is to come *seven Weeks, and sixty-two Weeks, i. e. sixty-nine Weeks* after the Date of a Decree to rebuild *Jerusalem*. 2dly. That this *Messias* is to be judicially put to Death after sixty-two Weeks, which follow the seven Weeks. 3dly. That, soon after his Death, a *Gentile Army* is to waste the City and Temple of the *Jews*, and, like a *Flood*, carry away the old Inhabitants of the Land, leaving it, at the End of the War, in *Desolations*. And 4thly. That, in the same Week, and before these Calamities should befall the *Jews*, the daily Sacrifice and Oblation of the Temple is to cease, and another Form of Religion be instituted: So that the only Difficulty, is, how we are to compute the Weeks, and fix the Decree and Desolations here mention'd,

Now it seems to me very plain, that, by the *seventy Weeks* here spoken of, we cannot understand *Weeks of Days*, which,

A true Computation of the Weeks,

which, in the whole, make no more, than one Year, four Months, and some odd Days, too short a space by much, for so many Events, as are here specified, to be fulfilled in; and, consequently, are oblig'd to compute them ^f for *sabbatical Weeks*, or Weeks of Years, which amount exactly to four hundred and ninety Years; that, by the *Commandment* to build *Jerusalem*, can be intended neither the Decree granted ^g by *Cyrus*, nor the Confirmation of it ^h by *Darius*, because *Jerusalem* was not restor'd or rebuilt by Virtue of either of these, but the Decree, ⁱ which *Artaxerxes* issued out, in the seventh Year of his Reign, which was the fullest and most effectual of any, as giving a general Release to all the Captive *Jews*, with full Power to return and settle at *Jerusalem*, and not only to rebuild their City, but to become (as they were before) a separate People, govern'd by their own Laws, both *Civil* and *Religious*: That, reckoning from this Decree seven and sixty-two Weeks of Years, in the Week immediately following, Christ our Lord did appear under the Character of the *Messias*;

^f Compare Gen. xxv. 27. Numb. xiv. 34. Ezek. iv. 6. ^g Ezr. i. 1, 2. ^h Ezr. vi. 5. ⁱ Ezr. vii. 11.

Messias ; at the End of that Week, was cut off ; and so, at the end of the *seventy Weeks*, did accomplish the purposes, for which they were determin'd, viz. To make Reconciliation for Iniquity, and to bring in universal Righteousness : And lastly, that the Destruction of the City and Temple, consequent upon the *Messiah's* Death, cannot be applied to the short Persecution of *Antiochus*, which did not come up to the Prophet's Description, did not destroy the Temple, did not reach the City to any great Degree, or depopulate the Land of its Inhabitants ; but properly relates to that universal Havock and Devastation, which the *Romans*, under *Titus*, brought upon *Jerusalem* : and, consequently, that our Saviour does not mistake or misapply the Prophecy, when he talks ^k of the Abomination of Desolation, spoken of by Daniel the Prophet, standing in the Holy Place.

^k Matt. xxiv. 15.

SECT.



S E C T. VI.

Of the Book of Daniel, and his
Prophecy, in Chap. ix.

An Ob-
jection
against
the Ge-
nuineness
of the
Book of
Daniel.

“ BUT of what avail are any Ci-
“ tations out of *Daniel*, when,
“ in all Probability, he was no Pro-
“ phet, but a certain Historian, who
“ liv’d some hundred of Years after
“ *Daniel’s* time, and, relating Events,
“ which, a long while before were
“ pass’d and gone, made use of Alle-
“ gories, and a symbolical Way of ex-
“ pressing himself, merely to give his
“ Writings the Air of Prophecies. * For,
“ if the ancient *Daniel*, who was car-
“ ried away in the *Babylonish* Captivi-
“ ty, was the Author of this Book,
“ how comes it to pass, that he mi-
“ stakes the very Names of the Princes,
“ whose Courts he liv’d in, and uses
“ so many Words derivative from the
“ *Greek*, which was a Language un-
“ known to the *Jews*, till a long while
“ after this Captivity? How comes he
“ not to be found (as well as other
“ Books

* Vid. Scheme of Literal Prophecy.

“ Books in the Old Testament) in the
 “ Version of the *Seventy*; not to be named
 “ among the Prophets recited ^b in *Ec-*
 “ *clesiasticus*; nor so much as taken No-
 “ tice of by *Jonathan*, who is supposed
 “ to have made (sometime before *Jesus*)
 “ the Paraphrases upon the Books of
 “ the Prophets? Had he been thought
 “ of *canonical* Authority, it is scarce
 “ imaginable how he could have been
 “ passed by in this dishonourable man-
 “ ner. But the Truth is, the *Jews*, to
 “ do themselves Credit, were great
 “ Composers of Books under the Names
 “ of their Prophets, and particularly
 “ under the Name of *Daniel*. We
 “ have several spurious Pieces, such
 “ as *The Song of the three Children*,
 “ the Stories of *Susanna* and the two El-
 “ ders, and of *Bel and the Dragon* extant
 “ at this Day; and in like manner have
 “ reason to believe, that the Author of
 “ the Book of *Daniel* was a Counterfeit,
 “ who liv’d about the Time of *Antio-*
 “ *chus Epiphanes*, and wrote of things
 “ pass’d in a prophetical Stile; especi-
 “ ally considering, that the Way of
 “ representing large Scenes of Affairs
 “ by such Images and Symbals, as he
 “ makes use of, is entirely unlike the
 “ Books of the other Prophets, but
 “ very

† Eccles. xlix.

“ very agreeable to that turn of Wri-
 “ ting, which the *Jews* took up, when
 “ they had been new form’d in the
 “ Schools of the *Greeks*. But, allow-
 “ ing the Book of *Daniel* to be genuine,
 “ yet if the *going forth of the Com-*
 “ *mandment*, (which is said to be the
 “ *Epocha* of the *seventy Weeks*,) does
 “ not signify the going forth of a Royal
 “ Decree, but the going forth of the
 “ Word or Commandment of God to
 “ *Jeremiah* the Prophet, promising a
 “ return from Captivity, and a re-
 “ building of *Jerusalem*; if the matters,
 “ to be accomplish’d within the Com-
 “ pass of the *seventy Weeks*, viz. *the*
 “ *finishing of Transgression and making*
 “ *an end of Sin*; *the making Reconcili-*
 “ *ation for Iniquity, and bringing in*
 “ *everlasting Righteousness*, &c. visibly
 “ relate to the setting up, and continu-
 “ ance of the *Jewish* State and Polity;
 “ if the City and Sanctuary were not
 “ destroy’d by any Army under *Jesus*,
 “ in whose time there was no War
 “ against the *Jews*, and who himself
 “ was seven and thirty Years dead,
 “ before this Desolation came upon
 “ that People; if *Jesus* cannot be said
 “ to have confirm’d the Covenant for
 “ one Week, who, by his Doctrine and
 “ Practice, confirm’d it all his Life;

“ nor

“ nor did he *cause the Sacrifice and Ob-*
 “ *lation to cease*, either by any positive
 “ Injunction, or by Virtue of his Death,
 “ since St. Paul (to signify his Adhe-
 “ rence to *Jewish Ceremonies*) says ex-
 “ pressly, that *he had not offended a-*
 “ *gainst the Temple*; and, lastly, if the
 “ Romans, when they destroy’d *Jeru-*
 “ *salem*, did not set up their Idols in
 “ any part of the Temple, which yet
 “ was certainly done ^d by the Order
 “ and Command of *Antiochus* several
 “ Years before; then is the whole Ap-
 “ plication of this Prophecy to Jesus
 “ grounded on palpable Mistakes;
 “ *Daniel’s Messias*, who was to be cut
 “ off, was not the *Messias* of the *Jews*,
 “ who was *never to die*; and the De-
 “ struction, which the Prophet alludes
 “ to, must be what *Antiochus*, and
 “ not what *Titus*, brought upon that
 “ People.

That there was such a Person, as
Daniel, of the *Jewish* Captivity in *Ba-*
bylon, famous for his Discovery of fu-
 ture Events, and for his great Piety
 and Devotion towards God, cannot be
 denied; and that the Prophecies he de-
 liver’d, were either by himself, or o-
 thers committed to Writing, and those
 Writings

Answered, by
 shewing
 the Ge-
 nuine-
 ness of
Daniel’s
 Book,
 from an-
 cient Te-
 stimonies.

Acts xxii. 8.

1 Maccab. i.

Writings carefully preserved and transmitted to Posterity, is no more than reasonable to suppose. The Character, which ^e the Prophet *Ezekiel* gives him, is his singular Prevalence with God in Prayer; and, whoever looks into the Book, that goes under his Name, will find its Author verifying this Character, and ^f his Success in this particular exemplified in several Instances. His Deliverance out of the *Den of the Lions*, and of his three Companions out of the *fiery Furnace*, Facts that are recorded ^g in the present Book, are expressly mentioned ^h in the Prayer of old *Eleazar*, in the Days of *Ptolemy Philopator*, and ⁱ by *Mattathias*, the Father of the *Maccabees*, some Years before the Death of *Antiochus*; and their Examples, among other Scripture Instances, are proposed as Motives to Confidence in God, and Constancy in their Religion: So that the *Jews*, in those times, took this Book to be written by *Daniel* himself, and accordingly made use of it. Nay, long before those times, we find *Neemiah* beginning his solemn Prayer to God in *Daniel's* own Words, ^k almost with no Variation: O Lord, the great
and

Ezek. xiv. 14, &c. ^e Vid. Ch. ii. 6, 9. ^g Vid. Ch. vi. 8 & 3. ^h 3 Maccab. vi. 6, 7. ⁱ 1 Maccab. ii. 59. ^k Compare Neh. i. 5. with Dan. ix. 4.

and dreadful God, keeping the Covenant and Mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his Commandments; which is a plain Proof, not only that he look'd upon this Book of *Daniel's* as true and authentick, but that he esteemed his manner of praying not unworthy his Imitation.

Josephus, we know, was a Priest, well Particular-
versed in the Law, and in the sacred Writings, whose Authority he professes larly that
to follow through all his *Antiquities*; of *Jose-*
and yet he seems to prefer *Daniel* above *phus*.
other Writers of that kind, and to give
us a more particular Account of his,
than of all the other Prophecies of the
Old Testament put together; for he as-
sures us, ¹ "That *Daniel*, not only fore-
" told future Things, which was com-
" mon to him with other Prophets, but
" that he set the time likewise for their
" coming to pass; that his Book there-
" fore ^m was held among the sacred
" Writings, and ⁿ read in publick As-
" semblies (which is the peculiar Privi-
" ledge of *Canonical Books*) in his Days,
" because the Completion of the E-
" vents, he foretold, gained him Be-
" lief with all Mankind". Nay, if
we will give Credit to this same *Jose-*
phus

¹ Antiq. xii. 11. ^m Antiq. x. 11. ⁿ Antiq. x.
12.

phus (and why he should not, in a Case of this Nature, be credited, I cannot see) this Book of *Daniel's* was looked upon as genuine and of divine Authority, even in the Days of *Alexander* the Great; otherwise the High-Priest had put a Banter upon him, ° when, at his coming to *Jerusalem*, and going into the Temple, he shewed him a Passage in it, wherein it was foretold, ¢ under the Emblem of an *He-Goat* with one Horn, over-coming a *Ram* with two, that a certain King of *Greece* should conquer the *Persians*; which *Alexander* took to himself, and perhaps, upon that very Account, might treat the *Jewish* Nation with more Clemency, than he did their Neighbours.

And the
People,
who li-
ved in
our Savi-
our's
time.

But however this be, 'tis certain, that in, and before the times of our blessed Saviour, the *Jews* received the Book of *Daniel* as authentick Scripture, without any Suspicion to the contrary. For, whereas ¤ the Name of the *Messias* and of the *Son of God*, which they applied to the *Deliverer* whom they expected; the Title of the *Kingdom of God*, and of *Heaven*, used for the State of Things under that *Deliverer*; his coming in the *Clouds of Heaven*, his taking all Judg-
ment

° Antiq. ix. 8. ¢ Dan. viii. 5, &c. ¤ Bishop
Chandler's Vindication.

ment to himself, and the Resurrection of the Dead, pursuant upon that his coming, are Expressions manifestly borrowed from *Daniel*; these Expressions were, at that time, the current Language of the *Jews*, insomuch that we find none of them surprized, when they heard the *Baptist* telling them, that *the Kingdom of God was at Hand*, or our Saviour calling himself so frequently *the Son of Man*, and citing *Daniel the Prophet* by Name; which they certainly would have been, and thereupon made no small Clamour, had they perceived that he was obtruding a *spurious Book* upon them for *Canonical*: and therefore we may conclude, that, since there confessedly was such a Person as *Daniel*, whose Character in the Prophet *Ezekiel* agrees with what we find in our present *Daniel*, since this Book of his has the Testimony of *Josephus*, (no incompetent Judge in a Matter of this Nature,) was commonly cited in the Times of our Saviour, was referred to before the Times of the *Maccabees*, was thought genuine in the Times of *Alexander*, and has received no small Confirmation from the Use and Application, *Nehemiah* makes of it; either we must suppose, that all these Persons, in their
I different

* Matt. iii. 2.

different Generations, were mistaken, or else we must allow, that our present Book of *Daniel* is no fictitious Piece of a later Date, but the work of the Prophet, whose Name it bears, and who lived in the Age, which the sacred Records have assigned him.

To which
his using
some
Names
different
from the
Greek Hi-
storians.

He lived indeed in great Prosperity, and in the Capacity of a Prime Minister, under some of the *Affyrian* Monarchs; and therefore, if, through Ignorance he has mistaken their Names, or recorded any thing of them, that is not true, this, we allow, will have a suspicious Aspect upon the Authority of his Book: But, when it is considered, how common a thing it was for Princes of the *East*, upon one Occasion or other, to multiply their Names, and, not only by Foreigners, but even by their own People to be called sometimes by one Name, and sometimes by another: How usual it was for them to continue the Titles of Honour, which were conferred for those great Exploits, whereby the Dignity of their Family was originally raised, and to adopt them into the Number of their *own*: How customary it was, upon their Accession to the Kingdom, for them to change their Names, and yet the first and *private* Name be still retained by most other People,

People, while the *Imperial* Name appeared in publick Acts, or was used at Home only : whoever considers this, I say, will cease his Wonder, when, amidst such a variety of Appellations for one and the same Person, he finds *this* Historian making use of one, and *that* of another, according as his Fancy, his Pronunciation, or the Custom of the Country, where he liv'd, leads him.

Daniel, in all Probability, calls the same Person *Darius Medus*, whom the Greek Historians call *Cyaxares* 11 ; but, when it is observed, that these Historians agree with *Daniel* as to the main Points of his Narration, viz. ' That *Babylon* was taken by an Army of *Medes* and *Persians*, whereof the *Medes*, being the superior, were at that time, named first ; that *Cyaxares*, King of *Media*, assisted at the Siege, and was treated by *Cyrus* as his Chief ; that the City, in the Night-time, was surprized by *Cyrus*, after a Day of Riot and Revelling, by diverting the Course of the River *Euphrates* ; that *Cyaxares*, being old and naturally unactive, chose to live at *Ecbatana*, the Capital of *Media*, while *Cyrus* attended the Affairs of the Government of *Babylon* ; and that *Cyrus*, upon his Death, succeeded to the whole

I 2

Empire :

Vid. Xenop. Lib. 5. & 8. & Herod. Lib. 1.

Empire : If we observe, I say, the exact Agreement between these Historians, as to the chief Matters of Fact, we may easily dispense with some small difference in Point of Names ; especially considering, that the Authors lived at no less a distance than *Babylon* is from *Greece*, and that the *Greeks* consequently might make use of the Name, which he went by in *Media*, as best known to them, which the *Babylonians*, after he had taken their City, changed into *Darius Medus*, or the *Victorious Mede*, and which *Daniel*, being Captive in the Place, might in Conformity call him.

Of terms
of Art derived
from the
Greek.

It may happen indeed, that there is now and then a Word or two in the Book of *Daniel*, which may seem to have some Analogy to the *Greek* Tongue, and, with some little Variation, may be derived from it ; but then it is to be observed, that (besides the Precariousness of an Argument taken from the *Etymology* of Words, which is very often a pure Matter of fancy) the Words, that are produced of this kind, are, for the most part, *technical* Terms ; such as might slip into any Language, without being perceived, and such as a Writer might properly enough use, without understanding any more of the Tongue,
from

from whence they are borrowed. * *Architects* and *Mechanicks*, we know, use to this Day several *Greek* and *Arabick* Terms of Art in their respective Professions, and yet they do not pretend to understand the Language from whence they came; and why might not *Daniel*, speaking in Terms (as he certainly does, when he Names the musical Instruments, very probably of *Grecian* make, which were used at the Consecration of *Nebuchadnezzar's* Golden Image) why might not he, I say, make use of Words of a foreign Extract, and, at the same time, be supposed a Stranger to the other Parts of that Language. This, I think, is the common Privilege of most Writers. Nor is the Mixture of some such *Greek* Terms in the *Caldee* Language so difficult a Matter to account for, if we will but allow, what *Grotius* observes, viz. " That, before *Daniel's* Age, many Colonies both of the *Ionians* and "
Æolians, having settled themselves in "
Asia Minor, (which lies contiguous to "
some Provinces of the great *Eastern* "
Kingdoms,) might, that way, communicate the Names of what they invented or improved, even as far as "
Babylon it self.

His being omitted in the Version of the Seventy.

The Translation of the *Septuagint* Interpreters has been held in such Esteem, that, to have any part of Scripture omitted in it, would give a just Suspicion, as if it had not been extant, or not known, at the time when those learned Men undertook the Work: but this is so far from being true in the Case of *Daniel*, that we find the *Seventy's* Version of him read publicly in our Saviour's time; that we find ^v *Justin Martyr* and ^w *Clemens Romanus*, who both wrote before *Theodotion's* Version was made, citing Passages out of it; that we find St. *Jerome* giving us several various Readings, different from those in *Theodotion*, sometimes from those of *Aquila* and *Symmacus* out of it, and, at the same time, telling us, that this Translation of *Daniel* was repudiated, and that of *Theodotion* substituted in its room, by the Doctors of the Church. It was *Origen* indeed, who first brought it into discredit, by his comparing it with that of *Theodotion* from the Original, in his *Hexapla*, which shew'd its Imperfections a little too plainly: but then its Degradation proves, that before this happen'd to it, it was us'd in the Christian Church

^v Dial. cum Triph. Ed. Ox. p. 87. ^w Ad Corinth. Ep. i.

Church all along, and held to be as *Canonical*, as any other Books of Scripture.

The Omission of *Daniel's* Name in the Enumeration of the Prophets, which we meet with * in *Ecclesiasticus*, is of no great Moment, because we find no mention made of *Ezra*, as well as him : and tho' much may be said, * as to the Imperfection of that Book, y the probable loss of some part of it in *Egypt*, or the Boldness or Negligence of the Transcribers ; yet, since the rest of the Books of the Old Testament were written in *Hebrew*, which was the common Language of *Judea*, and that, wherein *Jesus* the Father of *Sirach* wrote, and a great part both of the Books of *Ezra* and *Daniel* was written in *Caldee*, which was a Tongue not so well known in *Judea* ; † the Author's Ignorance of that Tongue was the true Occasion, as I take it, of the Omission of these two, and only of these two famous Writers, in that Catalogue of the Prophets.

There are sundry Reasons likewise to be given, why we have no *Caldee* Paraphrase upon *Daniel*, as well as the rest of the Prophets : For, besides that

In the Catalogue of Prophets in *Ecclesiasticus*,

And the Paraphrase of *Jonathan*.

I 4 a good

* Jer. on Dan. iv. 8. Chap. xlix. * Vid. Prologue to *Ecclesiasticus*. † Vid. Prol. to *Ecclesiasticus*.
† Whiston's literal Accomplishment.

a good part of *Daniel* is in the *Caldee* Tongue, and upon that account might the less need one; 'tis a general Complaint among the *Jews* themselves, that a great many of their ancient *Targums* have been lost, and an acknowledg'd Case, that some of their sacred Writers (such as *Ezra* and *Nehemiah*, for Instance, Men famous in the *Jewish* Story, and the latter of them highly celebrated by the Son of *Syrach*) never had any. The Truth is, the frequent Calamities, which beset the *Jewish* Nation, and dispers'd them into other Countries, made them negligent of their Books; left them no leisure to transcribe long *Paraphrases*, and when, by mixing among other People, they had lost the Knowledge of the Language, left them no Ability to do it. So that, amidst this Ignorance and Confusion, 'tis no Wonder, if many valuable Copies were lost; * some of which have since come to Light, but there is Reason to apprehend that the *Targum* upon *Daniel* never will. For so much does *Daniel* speak of the *Messias*, describe the Signs, and define the time of his coming so precisely, that the *Jews*, per-

* It is but the other Day that the *Targums* of the two Books of *Chronicles* were discovered. Bishop *Chandler's* Vindication.

perceiving the Advantage, which their Adversaries, the Christians, might make of it, were under strong Temptations, either to omit, or suppress the Paraphrase of a Prophet so diametrically against them: And accordingly, we have a Story from * one of their *Rabbins*, that favours not a little of some such Practice, viz. " That when *Jonathan* had finished his *Targum* on *Job*, *Proverbs*, " and the *Psalms*, and was going on " to *Daniel*, he was restrained by a " Voice, which bid him give over " *there*, lest the Sons of Men should " learn from *Daniel* the time of the " *Messias*.

The Plainness indeed of *Daniel's* Prophecies has been an Objection to their Authority of a long standing, though it be certainly † as easy for an all-knowing God to foretel all the Circumstances of any Event, or to reveal the whole Series of Events, in their proper Connexion and Succession, as to declare one single Occurrence: But the Cavil against them upon account of their Style, as being dark and *symbolical*, unlike what the other Prophets write, agreeable to the turn of the *Grecian* Schools, and, consequently, of a more modern

The Plainness of his Prophecies,

* *R. Abrudabam* in *Zaccath's* *Inchasm*. f. 45.

† *Bishop Chandler's* *Vindication*.

His Em-
blemari-
cal Style.

modern Date, is somewhat new and singular. All the *Greeks*, that we know of, are Strangers to this manner of writing; they abound indeed in Figures and Allegories, but the *symbolical* and *emblematical* Form was purely *Oriental*, and what the other Prophets as well as *Daniel*, as Occasion requires, pursue.

For does not ^a *Isaiab* foretel the Destruction of the *Egyptians* under the Image of his *striking with a great and strong Sword the Leviathan* (or *Crocodile*) and *slaying the great Dragon that is in the Sea*? Does not ^a *Ezekiel* prophesy of *Pbaraoh*, under the Figure of a great Dragon, that lives in the midst of the River; of the King of Babylon, under the Emblem ^b of a large Eagle with great Wings; and of the *Affyrian*, under the Similitude ^c of a tall Cedar upon Lebanon, exalted above all Trees, and reaching to the Clouds with its Top, &c? It is the Genius of the *Eastern* People to be delighted with Fiction and Imagery; and therefore no wonder, if the Time, and Place, where *Daniel* was Captive, suggested to him this Method of writing, which, however strange and abstruse it may seem to us, was

as

^a *Isai.* xxvii. 1. ^a *Ezek.* xxix. 3. ^b *Ezek.* xvii. 3, 12. ^c *Ezek.* iii. 1.

* as intelligible to the skilful Readers of those Days, as the most plain and simple Narration.

'Tis Folly therefore for us, at this Distance of time, to talk of the Propriety of the prophetick Style ; nor is it worth while to dispute, whether the *Jews*, more than other Nations, were Forgers of Books under some great Mens Names. Let it but once be proved, that the *Jews* did ever approve of the Authority of those Pieces, which were fathered upon *Daniel* ; or that any other *Greek* Book (for these Pieces were all written in *Greek*) was ever allowed to creep into the *Jewish* Canon, and then something may be said : But to tell us, that some *Greek Jews*, remote from *Judea*, wrote two or three Romances, and ascribed them to *Daniel*, affects the Prophet's Credit only in this respect, that it gives us to understand (since no one chuses a Father of disrepute in such a Case) that his Writings were in great Esteem with the *Jewish* Church at the time, when these *spurious*

And Books
forged
under his
Name, can
be any
valid Ob-
jection.

* The *Ram* was the Royal Ensign of the *Perstians*, and the *Goat*, (since their King *Caranus*,) was the Arms of *Macedon* : And these Kingdoms, represented by *Daniel* under these Emblems, were as well understood then, as are the Arms, the Colours, and Field of Escutcheons by *Heralds* now. Bishop *Chandler's* Vindication.

Daniel's
Prophecy
vindica-
ted.

ous Pieces were publish'd in his Name. After this full Vindication of the Authority of the Book of *Daniel*, it will be no hard matter to justify the Application of his Prophecy, concerning the *seventy Weeks*, to the times of our blessed Saviour. For, though the original Word [*Debar*] which we render *Commandment* does sometimes denote a Promise or Injunction from God to his Prophet; yet, in this Place, it can signify nothing but a *Royal Decree*, because mention is made therein of *rebuilding Jerusalem with its Streets and Walls*, and restoring the People to their ancient State, which could never be effected, but by the Favour and Encouragement of the Prince, who had them in Captivity.

Though *Jesus* was put to Death *seven and thirty Years* before the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, and did not appear in Person to Head any Army against it; yet, as we believe that he rose from the Dead, and was afterwards seated at the Right-hand of God, to carry on the Ends of the *mediatorial Kingdom*; and, as the Orders and Councils of Kings are executed by their Servants, while they themselves are at a great Distance, and yet the Events are ascribed to their Names: Such was the

the Violence of the Destruction, which befel the *Jews*, and so apparent were the Marks of God's Anger against them, that it may well be call'd in Scripture-Phrase, *the coming of the Lord*, and the *Romans*, who, by his Appointment, were the Instruments of it, *the People of the Prince that shall come*: even as the *Affyrians*, upon the like Occasion, are called *the Rod of God's Anger*, and *the Staff in their Hand his Indignation*. And tho' *Antiochus Epiphanes* had the Image of *Jupiter* placed upon the *Jewish* Altar of Burnt-offerings, which stood in the Court before the Temple; yet we do not read of any farther Profanation of it: whereas the *Romans*, when the Fire was begun in the Temple, * placed upon the Battlements of the outward Wall, the Standards of their Legions, whereon were painted the Images of their tutelary and military Gods, and so, offering Sacrifices to them, fulfilled the Prophecy concerning *the Abomination of those that made Desolate*.

Thus by the Hands of the *Roman* Army, *Jesus* accomplished one part of the Prophet's Prediction; and the remainder of it he did by himself. By the several Transactions of his Life, he
sealed

^c Joh. xxi. 22. ^d Dan. ix. 26. ^e Isai. x. 5.
* *Vid.* Joseph. de Bell. Ind.

sealed up, or put an end to the Prophecies, which went before concerning him; by his Preaching the Gospel for the Space of his Ministry, he confirmed the Covenant with many for one Week; by his Death and Passion he was consecrated and anointed to his Priestly-Office; by the Sacrifice of himself he virtually put an end to all other Oblations; and by the inestimable Merit of that Sacrifice he finished the Transgression, and made an end of Sins; made Reconciliation for Iniquity, and brought in everlasting Righteousness. For this is the Sense of the Apostle, who never before was accounted, and, for his Defence before Festus (wherein he only endeavours to assail himself of the Aspersion of having gone about to profane the Temple) cannot, with any Justice, be accounted, a Friend to Jewish Ceremonies, that Christ ^f hath blotted out the Hand-writing of Ordinances, which were contrary to us, and taken it out of the way, nailing it to his Cross; by whom we are justified above what the Law could do for us, and ^g in whom we have Redemption through his Blood, even the Forgiveness of Sins, according to the Riches of his Grace.

S E C T.

^f Col. ii. 14.^g Eph. i. 7.



S E C T. VII.

*Of the right Application of some other
Prophecies.*

“ BUT why should we dwell up- The Ob-
 “ on such a dark and *visionary* jection.
 “ Writer, as *Daniel*, when the plainest
 “ Prophet of them all, if we take him
 “ in his first and most obvious Sense,
 “ has nothing to do with *Jesus*, and his
 “ Actions, but refers us manifestly to o-
 “ ther Persons, and other Things: when
 “ ^a that Prophecy of *Micah*, which speaks
 “ of a *Ruler*, who is *to come out of Beth-*
 “ *lehem*, and whose goings forth have
 “ been of old, from everlasting, was in-
 “ tended of *Zerobabel* only (as appears
 “ by the Context) who was descended
 “ from the Royal House of *David*, a
 “ Family of 500 Years standing; and
 “ when ^b that famous Chapter of *Isaiah*,
 “ so loudly boasted of by Christians,
 “ and so frequently cited by the Apo-
 “ stles, is, when enquired into, nothing
 “ else, but a prophetic Description of
 “ the Sufferings of the *Jews* (one Per-
 “ son,

^a Micah v. 2.

^b Chap. liii.

“ son, according to the *prophetick* Style,
 “ being put for a whole Nation) under
 “ the *Babylonish*, or some other Capti-
 “ vity? The Truth is, ‘there is not a
 “ Passage, occurring in the Prophets,
 “ which, in its direct and primary
 “ View, may not be applied to differ-
 “ rent Persons and Events, than Je-
 “ sus and his Apostles: And if so,
 “ why should we give up our Rea-
 “ son, and destroy the plain Sense and
 “ Connexion of what we read, in hum-
 “ ble Submission to their forced and
 “ unnatural Citations. The Christian
 “ Cause may be good, but, when it
 “ is supported by no better Proofs,
 “ than what are thus drawn from Pro-
 “ phesy, it seems to be in a weak and
 “ tottering Condition.

Answered,
 ed, by
 shewing
 that the
 Prophecy
 in *Micah*
 v. cannot
 relate to
Zerobabel.

It is a general Observation of God's
 Kindness to the *Jews* (and might be
 evinced by several Instances) before
 they were utterly rejected from his Fa-
 vour, that whenever any National Cal-
 lamity was coming upon them, he al-
 ways sent a Prophet unto them with
 some consolatory Message, and gene-
 rally with the Promise of the *Messias*
 attending it. Accordingly, the Prophet
Micah, in part of the foregoing Chap-
 ter, and in the beginning of this under
 our

our present Consideration, had foretold the Invasion of the *Assyrians*, and the Defolation, which they would bring upon the Land; ^d *Be in Pain, and Labour to bring forth, O Daughter of Zion, like a Woman in Travail; for now shalt thou go forth out of the City, and thou shalt dwell in the Field, and thou shalt go even to Babylon, for* ^e *they have laid siege to thee, and they shall smite the Judge of Israel with a Rod upon the Cheek:* But then, to comfort them under this Calamity, he assures them of this, that not only the People, who sought their Ruin, should themselves be destroyed by a superior Power, ^f *which should waste the Land of Assyria with the Sword, and the Land of Nimrod in the Entrance thereof;* but that, from one of their Cities, which was then of small Esteem, the *Messias*, ^g *whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting, should come forth, and dignify the Place with the honour of his Birth;* for, that *to come forth, and to be born* in a place, are Terms synonymous ^h all Commentators do agree.

Upon ⁱ the decree of *Cyrus* for the Restauration of the *Jews*, we find *Zerobabel* indeed, among other Princes of
K the

Micah iv. 10. ^e Ch. v. 1. ^f Ver. 6. ^g Ver. 2.
id. Grot. in Locum. ⁱ 2 Chron. xxxvi. 23.

the People, super-intending Matters, and taking upon him the Government of the Tribe, to which he belonged ; but that he should be the Person intended by the Prophecy is impossible, because he was not Born in *Bethlehem*, which is the Place assigned for the Birth of this *Ruler*, but in *Babylon*, as his Name imports. He was never any *Ruler of Israel*: for, tho' he might be at the Head of the Captivity for some Years, yet it was without the Title and Authority of a Governour ; and, when he had executed his Commission, he returned to *Babylon*, and there died. But now, that the *Messias* was to be Born in *Bethlehem*, and no where else, is plain ^k from the Answer, which the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* make *Herod*, upon his consulting them, and their Quotation of *Micah* for the Proof of it ; is plain from the general Notion, which not only the Learned, but the Vulgar among the *Jews*, had at that time imbibed from Scripture, ¹ *That Christ was to come of the Seed of David, and out of the Town of Bethlehem, where David was born* ; and is plain from that Petition in their Liturgy, wherein they pray for the Advent of the *Messias* in these Terms ;

Shake

^k Matt. ii. 1, &c.

¹ Joh. vii. 41.

^m *Shake thy self from the Dust, arise, put on thy beautiful Garments, O my People, by the Hand of Ben-Jesse the Bethlehemite bring Redemption near to my Soul.*

Zerobabel indeed might be a Man of Renown in his Generation; but it is carrying the Matter much too far, to say of him, that he should ⁿ *stand and rule in the Strength of the Lord, and in the Majesty of the Name of the Lord his God*; and much more is it so, to say, that ^o *the going forth, or the Birth of this Ruler was of old, and from the Days of Eternity*, (as the marginal Note has it,) which is only applicable to the *Messias*, and in a proper Sense, only verified in our blessed Saviour, ^p *Who in the Beginning was with God.*

And, in like manner, if we consider the Words of the Prophet *Isaiab*, and compare them with our Lord's History, as the *Evangelists* have recorded it, we shall soon perceive that they are applicable no where else. * For, whereas the *Evangelists* give us a particular Account of his low and destitute Condition; that he was Born of mean Parents, and bred up in the servile Employ of a Carpenter;

Nor that in *Isaiab* liii. to the Jews in general.

K 2

ter;

^m Bp. Chandler's Defence of Christianity. ⁿ Micah iv. 4. ^o Ver. 2. ^p Joh. i. 2. * Bullock's Reasoning of Christ and his Apostles considered.

ter ; that, after he entered upon his publick Ministry, he had no certain Dwelling-place, and was generally obliged to others for the necessary Supports of Life ; the Prophet tells us of the Person, he describes, that ^a *he was to grow up, as a Root out of the dry Ground, was to have no Form or Comeliness, and, when we should see him, there was to be no Beauty, that we should desire him.* Whereas they describe the Contempt and Indignity which he incurred, upon the Account of the Meanness of this his Condition, being often reproached with such Expressions as these, *Is not this the Carpenter's Son ? And can any good Thing come out of Nazareth ?* The Prophet hath told us, *That* ^b *he was despised and rejected of Men, and we hid, as it were, our Faces from him, he was despised, and we esteemed him not.* Whereas they relate the Sufferings and Persecutions, and, at last, the unjust and ignominious Death, which he was made to suffer ; the Prophet acquaints us, that ^c *he was a Man of Sorrow, and acquainted with Grief ;* ^d *was taken from Prison and from Judgment, was number'd with Transgressors ; and* ^e *cut off out of the Land of the living.* Whereas they

^a Isai. liii. 2. ^b Ver. 3. ^c Ver. 8. ^d Ver. 12.
^e Ver. 8.

they every where declare his Innocence, and that, for no Offence of his own, he was thus condemned to suffer; the Prophet asserts, ^w *That he had done no Violence, neither was any Deceit found in his Mouth*; but that ^x *he made his Soul an Offering for Sin, to justify many, by bearing their Iniquities, and to make Intercession for Transgressors*, which is the very Notion we have of the *Messias*. And, lastly, whereas they testify, that this same innocent and afflicted Person was raised from the Dead, and exalted to the Right-hand of God with Power and great Glory; the Prophet informs us before-hand, that he was to ^y *be exalted and extolled, and be very high*; and, because ^z *he poured out his Soul unto Death, therefore God would divide him a Portion with the great, and he should divide the Spoil with the strong*, which is certainly meant of his triumphant Assent and Glorification. But now with what Propriety of Construction can any thing of all this be applied to the Jewish People? *We hid, as it were, our Faces from him*, (says the Prophet, speaking in their Person,) *he was despised, and we esteemed him not, he was wounded for our Transgressions, he*

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was

^w Isai. liii. 9.
^z Isai. liii. 12.

^x Ver. 11, 12.

^y Isai. lii. 13.

was bruised for our Iniquities, the Chastisement of our Peace was upon him, and by his Stripes we are healed; here are two distinct Characters, which plainly respect different Persons: on the one hand, a Person greatly despised; on the other, the Persons despising him; one wounded and bruised, not for his own, but the Iniquities of others, and these latter healed by the Stripes and Bruises of the former; so that, if, (according to the Interpretation of some,) the *Jews* are meant by the suffering Person, who are meant by the Person, through whom and for whom they suffer? But, waving this Difficulty, in what possible Sense, may we ask, can it be true, that the *Jews* bore the Grievs, or carried the Sorrows of others; that they were wounded for other Mens Transgressions, or bruised for Iniquities not their own? The publick Calamities, which God at any time sent upon them, are, by all their Prophets, imputed to their own crying Sins; but the Person, here afflicted, is said to have *done no Violence, neither was any Deceit found in his Mouth*: And does this Character suit them under any Captivity, or other sort of Calamity, that the Prophet might have in view? If we will believe him, 'tis plain, he had another

Opinion

Opinion of them, when, in the very beginning of his Prophecy, we find him lamenting them, and their Captivity, in these Words ; *a Ah sinful Nation ! a People laden with Iniquity, a Seed of Evil-doers, Children that are Corrupters, they have forsaken the Lord, they are gone away backwards ; wherefore your Country is desolate, says he, your Cities are burnt with Fire ; your Land, Strangers devour it in your Presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by Strangers.*

After this, we need go no farther, I think, to prove the Falsity of this Assertion.—^b “ That the Proofs, taken out of the *Old*, and urg’d in the *New Testament*, are either not to be found in the *Old*, or not urg’d in the *New*, according to their *literal* and *obvious* Sense, because it is possible, (without any Violence to the Text,) to adapt them to some other Person and Event, besides *Jesus* and the Things relating to him”. But, to bring this Matter to a final Issue : Why we will suppose, that there really were more Grounds, than what have hitherto appeared, to dispute the Justness of the Application of any Prophecy ; yet, still we contend, that the Application of

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Christ

Why
Christ and
his Apostles
in their
Application
of the Pro-
phesies
were in-
fallible.

^a *Isai. i. 4.* ^b *Vid. Grounds of the Christian Religion. p. 39, 44.*

Christ and his Apostles is to be prefer'd before that of any other, because it was attended with such irresistible Proofs of its Fidelity, as must over-bear all the Scruples and Objections, that any other may be liable to. For, upon the Competition of two different Senses of the same Passage, can any thing in Nature be more decisive, than the Testimony of God? And can the Testimony of God appear by any stronger Evidence, than by the Power of Miracles supporting the Allegation? God certainly knew the Intention of every Prophecy deliver'd by his Spirit; and therefore if Christ and his Apostles, when they applied any Prophecy to the *Messias*, gave the best Proof, that could be given, of their being sent by God, and of their speaking and acting by his Commission, God himself must be understood to affirm their Application. The Authority of the Exposition must, in such a Case, be equal to that of the Prophecy; for there cannot be a better Proof, that the Prophet was sent from God, than the Expositor gives of his Mission, and the reason for assenting to the one, as well as the other, is on both Sides the same.

But

† *Rogers's Necessity of Revel.*

But this is not all, our Blessed Saviour was not only a Worker of Miracles, whereby he demonstrated that *God was with him*, but he was a *Prophet* likewise, ^d *Mighty in Word*, as well as *Deed*, *before God and all the People*; and, consequently, his Determination of the Sense of any Prophecy could not but be true, because it proceeded from the same Spirit, from which the Prophecy it self originally came: And, as ^e *no Prophecy came in old Time by the Will of Man, but holy Men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*; so that Interpretation cannot fail of Certainty, which is not the Result of private Guess or Reasoning, but directed by the first mover of the Prophecy it self; because no single Man is better able to explain the Sense of his own Thoughts and Words, nor any Prophet, the Meaning of his own Prophecy, than the Holy Spirit is to interpret his own Inspirations. But this is not all still. Our Blessed Saviour was not only a *Prophet*, but he was that very Prophet, whose Office it was to explain the Sense of the *Jewish* Scriptures, and to remove the Obscurity, which was to remain on many Prophecies, until his coming. For, as the Penmen of old frequently declared

^f Luk. xxiv. 19.

^g 2 Pet. i. 21.

clared concerning several of their prophetical Discourses, that they were dark as yet, and in a manner unintelligible; that their Predictions were *closed up*, and ^f *their Visions become as the Words of a Book, that is sealed*; so they assure us withal, that a time would come, when ^g *the Deaf should hear the Words of the Book, and the Eyes of the Blind see out of Obscurity*; and that time is no other, than the Days of the *Messias*, “When the deep and hidden Things of the Law, says ^h *Maimonides*, “shall be made known unto all”; for ⁱ *I know that the Messias cometh*, says the Woman of *Samaria* (and herein she spake the Sense of the *Jews*, as well *Samaritans*) and when he is come, he will teach us all Things. If then our Lord and Saviour was a Teacher sent from God, to reveal the hidden Things of God, and to explain the Scripture to us; 'tis impious, I think, to imagine, that he did not understand the true, and blasphemous to say, that he obtruded false Senses upon us.

But to satisfy our selves more fully in this Matter, let us follow him a little thro' some of the Prophecies, than unfulfill'd, which he quotes and applies to himself,

^g *Isai. xxviii. 10.* ^h *Isai. xxxii. 1, 3.* ⁱ *Maim. de Reg. cap. ult.* ^j *Joh. iv. 75.*

self, and observe, as we go along, whether, in the Event, they were not accomplish'd according to his Intention and Application of them; for this will shew the Skill of the *Interpreter*, and justify our reliance on the Sense, which he gives of them. *He that eateth with me, hath lift up his Heel against me*, is a Prophecy, taken^k from the *Psalmist*, and^l applied by our Saviour to the Traytor *Judas*, then at the Table with him; and yet who would have thought that an *Apostle* who had liv'd so long with him, and receiv'd all possible Assurance of his divine Mission, heard the Excellency of his Doctrine, and seen the Wonders of his Works, and Innocence of his Life, would have ever enter'd into a wicked Combination to betray him to Death? But so it was in the Event.

I will smite the Shepherd, and the Sheep of the Flock shall be scatter'd abroad, is a Text he cites from^m *Zechariah*, and appliesⁿ it to the Desertion of his Disciples; but who could imagine, that such a Number of Men, closely attach'd to him by Duty and Interest, and who, that very Night, had made such warm Protestations to the contrary, should prove so weak and ungrateful, as all to forsake him

^k Psal. xli. 9. ^l Joh. xiii. 18. ^m Ch. xiii. 7.
ⁿ Matr. xxvi. 31.

him and flee at such a Juncture ? But so it was in the Event.

The ° *Brazen Serpent*, which Moses set up in the *Wilderness*, is the *Type* he makes use of, to signify by what Death he was to die ; but who could think, before it happened, that a foreign Governor should proceed to blood upon Questions about the *Jewish Law* ; that, upon a wild Accusation, he should condemn a Person, in whom he found no Fault ; and condemn him to the Cross, which was a *Roman Punishment*, and only inflicted on the vilest Malefactors ? But so it was in the Event.

Jonah's being three Days and three Nights in the *Whale's Belly*, before he was cast out upon Shore, is another Emblem of his, to denote the time between his Interrment and his Resurrection ; but who, that had seen him crucified, dead and buried, would have ever thought of his rising precisely according to the Space of time that was limited ? But so it was in the Event.

Once more ; Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the Right-hand of Power, and coming in the Clouds of Heaven, is a Passage, which he borrows from *Daniel*, to declare to the High-Priest

° Joh. iii. 14, 15. § Ch. vii. 23, 14. ¶ Matt. xxvi. 64.

Priest his future Exaltation ; but to see him stand a Prisoner at the Judgment-Seat in expectance of his Doom ; to see him led away to Execution, with the Clamours and Insults of the People about him ; to see him besmear'd with Blood, and panting, and fainting, and dying on the *accursed* Tree, who would have thought, that this was the Person, ** who was ordained of God to be the Judge of Quick and Dead*, and to whom he hath *† given a Name, which is above every Name, that at the Name of Jesus every Knee should bow, of Things in Heaven, and Things in Earth, and Things under the Earth ?* But so it was in the Event.

And therefore we may infer, that since these Events, and ** many more* that might be mentioned, how improbable soever they might seem, and beyond the compass of Man's Conjecture, did always answer to their respective Prophecies, according to the Applications, which Christ made of them ; this is
a Testi-

** Acts x. 42. † Phil. ii. 9, 10.*

** Such are the Rejection of the Jews, the Destruction of their City and Temple, the long Duration of their Desolation, and the Conversion of the Gentiles to the Christian Religion, &c. All which our Saviour foretold, and they accordingly came to pass.*

a Testimony beyond Exception, that he could not possibly be mistaken in their meaning, and consequently that all his other Interpretations of Scripture must be true, because he had always the same infallible Spirit residing in him.

A Recapitulation of the three foregoing Sections.

And now to take a Review of the three foregoing Sections, which, in Point of Matter, are much the same. If there are different kinds of Prophecies in the Old Testament, some that are applicable to Christ, and the Events concerning him expressly, and others in a Sense not seemingly so *obvious* to us, but what the Spirit of God might have primarily in view : If our Saviour and his Apostles us'd sometimes a *typical*, sometimes a *parabolical*, and sometimes an *allusive* way of discoursing with the People, which however did not affect their *literal* Application of the Prophecies : If St. Matthew, by the Words, *that it might be fulfilled*, intends no more (according to the Hebrew Phrasiology) than *hereby was verified*, or this Event answer'd the Prediction, or the like : If, by *out of Egypt have I called my Son*, (which was a common Adage among the *Jews*) he means no more than a providential Deliverance

liverance from some eminent Danger: If *John* the Baptist, considering the great Resemblance between him and *Elias* in their Temper and Disposition, as well as many Articles of their Lives, might properly enough be called after his Name: If the Blindness and wilful Obstinacy of the *Jews* in our Saviour's time will justify his applying to them the Character, which *Isaiah* gives of the People, who liv'd in his Days: If, by *Isaiah's* Virgin, who was to *conceive and bear a Son*, is properly to be understood (as both the Etymology of the Word, and the Solemnity of the Introduction shew) a Conception without the Use or Knowledge of Man; which Conception was matter of Assurance to the House of *David*, that the intended Invasion should not prosper against them: If the Character of *the Prophet like unto Moses* suits neither with *Joshua*, nor with a Succession of Prophets in the *Jewish* Church, but, in its chief Lineaments, can agree with none but our Blessed Saviour: If the Prophecy of *Daniel's* Weeks (when rightly computed) can belong to no other Event, than the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, and the Contents thereof can properly refer to our Lord's Transactions only: If the Book of *Daniel* has all the genuine Marks,

both

both internal and external, concurring with the Testimony of the *Ancients*, of its being a canonical Piece of Scripture; infomuch, that neither his calling some *Assyrian* Princes by Names, different to what the *Grecian* Historians give them, nor his occasionally using some *Terms of Art*, which might possibly be of *Grecian* Derivation; neither his being omitted (as is pretended) in the Version of the *Septuagint*, in the Characters of the Prophets given us by *Ecclesiasticus*, in the *Caldee* Paraphrase of *Jonathan*, nor having some spurious Pieces, still extant, forg'd in his Name; neither the Plainness of his Predictions, nor the *symbolical* Turn of his Stile (which was equally in use among other Prophets) can be any valid Objection against it: If the *Commandment*, mention'd in the Prophecy of *Daniel*, does properly denote a Royal Decree, and our Saviour (though not personally present) may be said to go against the *Jews*, and the *Romans*, who were the Instruments of Providence, in destroying the City, and profaning the Temple, may be said to be his Army or People: If Christ by his coming into the World, and the other Transactions of his Life, may be said to seal up the Prophecy; by his preaching the Gospel, to confirm the

Covenant

Covenant by his Death and Passion, to be anointed to his Priestly Office by the Sacrifice of himself, to put an End to all other Oblations, and by the Merit of that Sacrifice to finish Transgression, and make an End of Sin: If the Ruler of Israel in Micah cannot be understood of Zerobabel, who was born at Babylon, not at Bethlehem, and never had any supreme Command in Judea; but must relate to the Person of the Messias, and in him, to our Blessed Lord, who, by his eternal Generation answers exactly the Description of the Prophet: If the Man of Sorrow and of Grief in Isaiah, who had afterwards his Portion with the Great, and divided the Spoil with the Strong, cannot, in any Propriety of Diction, agree with the Nation of the Jews in any supposable Case of publick Calamity or Restoration, but, according to the tenor of the Text, does most manifestly denote the Messias, and, in him, the Person of our Lord, who, in the State of his Humiliation is described by the one, and in the State of his Exaltation, by the other: If all these things, I say, upon an impartial Examination, appear to be so; then are the Applications, which the Evangelical Writers have made of the Prophecies in the Old to the Trans-

L actions

both internal and external, concurring with the Testimony of the *Ancients*, of its being a canonical Piece of Scripture; infomuch, that neither his calling some *Assyrian* Princes by Names, different to what the *Grecian* Historians give them, nor his occasionally using some *Terms of Art*, which might possibly be of *Grecian* Derivation; neither his being omitted (as is pretended) in the Version of the *Septuagint*, in the Characters of the Prophets given us by *Ecclesiasticus*, in the *Caldee* Paraphrase of *Jonathan*, nor having some spurious Pieces, still extant, forg'd in his Name; neither the Plainness of his Predictions, nor the *symbolical* Turn of his Stile (which was equally in use among other Prophets) can be any valid Objection against it: If the *Commandment*, mention'd in the Prophecy of *Daniel*, does properly denote a Royal Decree, and our Saviour (though not personally present) may be said to go against the *Jews*, and the *Romans*, who were the Instruments of Providence, in destroying the City, and profaning the Temple, may be said to be his Army or *People*: If Christ by his coming into the World, and the other Transactions of his Life, may be said to seal up the Prophecy; by his preaching the Gospel, to confirm the

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L actions

actions in the *New Testament*, not to be called *impertinent* or *ridiculous*; nor can our Blessed Saviour, with any Justice, be said to have *mistaken* the genuine Sense of the Scriptures concerning himself; since the Sense, which he gives us, he prov'd by the *Demonstration of the Spirit*, i. e. by predicting Events, and working Miracles, which were incontestibly true.



S E C T. VIII.

Of the Miracles of Jesus, and the Sense, wherein they are to be taken.

*The Ob-
jection.*

“ **M**IRACLES indeed, if in-
 “ *contestibly true*, are of some
 “ Importance in this Debate; but the
 “ Miracles of *Jesus* are of such a Na-
 “ ture, that we cannot well tell what
 “ to make of them. Had none, at any
 “ time, but the true Servants and Mes-
 “ sengers of God, been entrusted with
 “ this *miraculous* Power, much more
 “ Stress might then have been laid up-
 “ on it: But since *Moses* has informed
 “ us, that it may be in the Power of a
 “ false

“ false Prophet ^a to give a Sign or a
 “ Wonder, that may come to pass; since
 “ our Saviour has foretold us, that ^b there
 “ shall arise fall Christs, and false Pro-
 “ phets, who shall shew great Signs and
 “ Wonders, enough (if it were possible)
 “ to deceive the very Elect; since his A-
 “ postle has assured us, that ^c the co-
 “ ming of Anti-christ is after the work-
 “ ing of Satan, with all Power, and Signs,
 “ and lying Wonders; and, lastly, since
 “ History makes mention of several,
 “ such as Apollonius Tyanneus, Vespasian,
 “ and the Irish Stroker Greatrack, who
 “ miraculously cured Diseases, as well
 “ as Jesus; either we must have the
 “ Art of distinguishing true from false
 “ Prophets, or we can never account
 “ Miracles alone a sufficient Testimo-
 “ ny for such, as pretend to a Com-
 “ mission from God. Jesus indeed ap-
 “ peals to his Miracles, and some
 “ may imagine that the Words of the
 “ Prophet ^d (then shall the Eyes of the
 “ Blind be opened, and the Ears of the
 “ Deaf unstopped; then shall the lame
 “ Man leap as the Hart, and the Tongue
 “ of the Dumb shall sing) in the Cures,
 “ that he wrought, received their full
 “ Accomplishment: But that this Pro-
 “ phesy

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^a Deut. xiii. 1. ^b Matt. xxiv. 24. ^c Thess. ii. 9.
^d Isai. xxxv. 5, &c.

“ phesy is to be understood, not in a
 “ *literal*, but in a *figurative* Sense, not
 “ to denote the *outward* Maladies of
 “ the Body, but the *inward* Distempers
 “ of the Soul, is apparent from that
 “ whole Context. Both the preceding
 “ and subsequent *Passages*, are certain-
 “ ly *metaphorical*; and therefore (to
 “ make the whole consistent and uni-
 “ form) the intermediate Expressions
 “ ought, in the same manner, to be in-
 “ terpreted. And from hence we may
 “ conclude, that when *Jesus* seems to
 “ appeal to *Isaiah*, and to make the
 “ Cure of *corporeal* Diseases an Indica-
 “ tion of his being the true *Messiah*, his
 “ purpose is only to denote the sundry
 “ Passions and Disorders of the Mind,
 “ which are represented under the Me-
 “ taphors of *Blindness* and *Lameness*,
 “ and *Deafness*, &c. The Cure of these
 “ is a *godlike* Work; far above the Imita-
 “ tion of Man, or *Anti-christ*, and
 “ infinitely more miraculous, than heal-
 “ ing any *bodily* Distempers. Let o-
 “ thers then admire and adore *Jesus*, as
 “ much as they please, for his wonder-
 “ ful Cures of bodily Diseases, I am
 “ clearly for the *spiritual Messiah*, who
 “ remedies the Distempers of the Soul,
 “ and performs all those *mystical* O-
 “ perations, whereof the Cure of *cor-*
 “ *poreal*

“ *poreal* Infirmities is but a *Type* and
“ *Figure*.

That it was necessary for our Blessed Saviour, who pretended to come in the Character of a *Prophet*, or publick Minister from God, to be invested with a Power of working Miracles, which have all along been admitted as authentick Proofs of a *Divine Mission*, is what we had Occasion to take Notice of before. To this Power, and the Greatness of the Miracles resulting from thence, we find him making frequent Appeals, as a proper Testimony of his being *sent from God*. And well indeed might he be allowed to make Appeals of this kind, when upon so many Occasions he exercised a Power and Authority, not inferior to that of God; when, by the same *Omnipotence*, wherewith he created all Things at first, he multiplied a few Loaves and two Fishes, into a sufficiency to feed five Thousand; when, at his Command, the Wind and the Sea grew still, and unclean Spirits departed from Mens Bodies, confessing him to be *the Son of God*; when, acute Diseases and chronical Grievs, such as no length of Time, no Skill, no Remedies, no Expence could assuage, were equally cured with a Touch, nay, with a Touch of his Garment, with a Word, nay,

Answered from
the Great-
ness of
Christ's
Miracles.

with a Word, that operated effectually upon the absent, and at a distance; when, Persons at Death's Door, nay, actually Dead, and Dead for some time, were commanded back to Life and Health, and himself, when slain by the *Jews*, and committed to the Grave, was, according to his own Prediction, raised from the Dead by the same divine Spirit, whereby he *quickeneth* and *enliveneth* all Things.

Which
were a
Proof of
his Divine
Mission.

These, and many more Actions of the like Nature, recorded in the *Gospels*, are plain Demonstrations of a *Divine Power* residing in our Blessed Saviour: And if they were affected by a Divine Power, we have all the certainty imaginable of his being a *true Prophet* sent from God. For, of all the great Attributes of God, there are none that shine brighter, and more amiably in our Eyes, than *Truth* and *Goodness*; the *former* cannot attest a Lye, nor the *latter* seduce Men into dangerous and destructive Mistakes. And yet, if God should communicate any part of his Power to an *Impostor*, to enable him to work Miracles, in confirmation of his Pretences, what would become of these two Sacred Attributes? To suspect, I say, that Almighty God is capable of employ-

employing his infinite Power, and of disturbing the Course of Nature, with a design to mislead and delude Mankind, in what relates to their Eternal Concerns, is to destroy and subvert his very Nature, and leave ourselves no Notion at all of such a Being. Nay, for him to permit the same Evidences to be produc'd for Errors, as for Truth, is, in effect, to cancel his own *Credentials*, and make Miracles of no Significance at all: And therefore we may conclude, that, how artfully soever some *Impostors* may contrive their *Delusions*, yet, upon a strict Examination, there are always to be found some *Marks* and *Characters*, whereby to *distinguish* them from *real* Miracles.

Whether ever a *real* Miracle was wrought by any *false* and *idolatrous* Prophet, in Confirmation of his Pretensions, is a Matter that may well admit of debate. ^f It is certain, that, from the giving of the *Law*, we do not meet with any, that were ever wrought under such Circumstances; and therefore we may reasonably suppose, that the Caution, which *Moses* gives the *Jews*, & not to *hearken to any Prophet, who should give a Sign for following other Gods*, is not so much a *Prediction* of what should come

The meaning of the Passage concerning false Prophets. *Deut. xiii.*

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to

^f *Bf. Chandler's Defence*, p. 421. ^g *Deut. xiii.*

to pass, as a form of vehement *Dehor-tation*; that it does not so much imply a possibility of their *working such Signs*, as it earnestly forbids the being led away by them, upon the fairest Pretensions; that it is, in short, a manner of Speech, not unlike that of St. Paul to the Galatians, ^h*Though we, or an Angel from Heaven preach any other Gospel, than that, which we have preached, let him be accursed*: Where he does not suppose, that either the Apostles, or good Angels, would ever be induc'd to preach a Doctrine contrary to Christianity, but only puts the most *extraordinary Case*, and such a one, as would never happen, in order to shew, that, upon no account whatever, they were to recede from the Truth of the *Gospel*.

But be that as it will, this is apparent from the very Passage now under Consideration, that the holy Penman gives us a Sign, whereby we may discover the Prophet, here spoken of, to be no other than an *Impostor*, and that is, his tempting the People *to go after other Gods*: From whence we may gather, that, if Miracles have in themselves an evil End and Tendency; if they be wrought to introduce the Worship of other Gods, besides him, whom Reason, as well as Scripture,

^h Gal. i. 8.

Scripture; assures us to be *the only true God*; if they be done to seduce Men to immoral Doctrines or Practices, or to contradict a Religion, already establish'd by Miracles, that are incontestibly true; they can by no means, proceed from *the Finger of God*, but are the Effects, either of *humane* Fallacy and Delusion, or of a wicked and *diabolical* Interposition.

When therefore our blessed Saviour foretels, that ⁱ *false Christs, and false Prophets should arise, and shew great Signs and Wonders*, he plainly intimates, at the same time, that, by some means or other, these Wonders would be detected, and found to be *fallacious*; since they would not, with all their *speciousness*, have efficacy enough *to deceive the Elect*.
^k For the Phrase, *if it be possible*, (tho' it shews the greatness of the *Artifices* employ'd to *deceive*) very strongly implies an Impossibility, that good and considerate People should be *deceived* by them; and consequently evinces, that these false Miracles of Pretenders would be distinguishable from such, as were performed by God, or any Agents commission'd by him. How great soever then the Power of *Anti-christ* may be suppos'd to be, yet the Apostle has taken

And of that concerning false Christs, Matt. xxiv. 24.

ⁱ Matt. xxiv. 24. ^k Bp. Smallbrooke's Vind. p. 3.

ken care to inform us, that all his Operations would be but ¹*lying Wonders*, and that those, who should be *deceived* by them, would be such, as did *not believe the Truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness*; and such, as God would send a *strong Delusion upon*, that they should believe a *Lye*, as a Punishment for their Infidelity, and abandon'd Wickedness. But since, in this account of *Anti-christ*, he no where intimates, that good and faithful Christians should be thus deluded by him, but rather implies the very contrary; we have sufficient reason to conclude, that there are certain Notes of Distinction either respecting, *1st*, the Works themselves, and their manner of being done; or *2^{dly}*, the Persons themselves, and the Ends, for which they do them; whereby a Man of sober and sedate Reflection may discern the difference between *real Miracles*, and *lying Wonders*.

Ways to
distinguish
true
from false
Miracles.

From the
Works
them-
selves.

First, In relation to the Works themselves, it is required, ^m that they be *possible*, since no Power whatever can effect that which is strictly *impossible*; that they be *probable*, since the divine Power will hardly concern itself in what favours of *Fable* and *Romance*; that they be not *below the Majesty of God*, as he is the

¹ 2 Thess. ii. 10. &c. ^m Chandler on Miracles.

the Ruler and Governour of the World; nor *inconsistent* with his Character, as he is a good and gracious Being; that they be done *openly*, before a sufficient Number of competent Witnesses; *readily*, without any previous Forms or Ceremonies, which may make them look like *Incantation*; and *upon all proper and important Occasions*, to denote the permanency of that divine Power, by which they are done,

Secondly, In relation to the *Person*, pre-
tending to a *Divine Mission*, it is requi-
site, that he be a Man of *good Report* for
his unblameable Conversation; in the
perfect Exercise of his Reason and Sen-
ses; and *constant and uniform* in the Mes-
sage he delivers; and that the *Doctrine*,
which he endeavours to establish by his
Miracles, be consistent with the Princi-
ples of true *Reason* and *natural Religion*;
consistent with right *Notions* and *Wor-
ship* of God; consistent with the *former
Revelations* he hath made of his Will;
of a Tendency to destroy the Devil's
Power in the World, to recover Men
from their Ignorance, to reform them
from their Vices, to lead them into the
Practice of Virtue and true Godliness by
proper Motives and Arguments; and,
in short, to advance the general Welfare
of *Societies*, as well as every Man's par-
ticular

From the
Persons
that do
them.

ticular Happiness in this Life, and in his preparation for a Better. And now to observe a little, how all these *Characters* meet in the Blessed Jesus.

The Character of Jesus.

That *Jesus of Nazareth* was a Person of great Virtue and Goodness, in full Possession of his Reason and Senses, and constant and uniform in the Message he delivered to Mankind, not only the whole Tenor of his *Conduct*, as it is recorded by the *Evangelists*, but the Nature of his *Doctrine*, and Excellency of his *Precepts*, the manner of his *Discourses* to the People, and the Wisdom of his *Replies* to the insidious Questions of his Adversaries, are a plain Demonstration. That this Jesus ^a *was a Man approved of God by Miracles, Wonders, and Signs, which God did by him in the midst of all the People*, is manifest, not only from the Testimony of his Friends and Disciples, but ^o from the Concession of *Heathen Historians*, as well as the Traditions of the *Jewish Talmud*, wherein the Memory of them is preserved.

The Nature of his Miracles.

These Miracles indeed were above the Skill of Men or Angels to effect, but they were not therefore *impossible*, because subject to the Power of Almighty God.

^a Acts ii. 2. ^o Vld. Bp. Chandler's Defence, where he proves *this*, as well as the Traditions of the *Talmud*, by several Instances, p. 429.

God. ¶ For the same Agent, who formed the Eye, could restore the Blind to sight ; he, who wrought the whole Frame of our Bodies, could as easily cure the Maimed, or heal the Diseased ; and he, who causes the Rain to descend, and *to water the Earth, that it may minister Bread to the Eater, and Seed to the Sower,* could be at no loss to change Water into Wine, or to multiply the Loaves and Fishes, for the Relief of the Hungry.

These Miracles again, being Acts of *Mercy*, as well as *Power*, were not consistent with the Character of an *Imposter*, or the Agency of any wicked Spirit ; but, that God should have Compassion on his Creatures, and exercise his tender Mercies over the Works of his own Hands ; that he should give Bread to the Hungry, and Limbs to the Maimed, and Release to such, as were under the Captivity of Satan, is no improbable Thing at all. These were Actions suitable to his Majesty, and highly comporting with his Wisdom and Goodness, since they naturally tended both to beget Reverence in the Minds of Men towards his *Messenger*, and to reconcile them to the Belief and Obedience of his Heavenly Will.

These

¶ Isa. lv. 10. ¶ Chandler on Miracles.

The manner and end of his doing them.

These Miracles our Saviour did openly, in the Temple, in the Synagogues, and on the *Festivals*, when the Concurrence of People was greatest, and when the Doctors of the Law, who came on purpose to ensnare him, were sitting by, and beholding what was done. *These* he did readily, and with a Word's speaking: for ^r *Peace be still* quelled the raging of the Winds and Waves; ^s *Young Man, arise*, revived the Widow's Son; ^t *Ephatha, be opened*, gave the deaf Man Hearing; and ^u *Lazarus, come forth* raised him from the Grave, who had been *four Days dead*. *These* he did frequently, and upon all proper Occasions: For, after the time that he enter'd upon his Ministry, scarce a Day passed without some fresh Instances of his Power and Goodness, insomuch that, if all his Actions of this kind had been particularly recorded, ^w *the World itself*, as the Apostle says, (but by way of *Hyperbole*) *would not contain the Books, which should be written*; and (what crowns all) *these* he did with a Design to establish a Religion, ^x whose Business it is to give Men the most exalted Thoughts of God and his Providence, and

^r Mark iv. 39. ^s Luke vii. 14. ^t Mark vii. 34, 35. ^u Joh. xi. 43, 44. ^w Joh. xx. 25. ^x *Candler on Miracles.*

and the greatest Certainty of future Rewards and Punishments; to oblige them, by the strongest Motives, to observe and practice whatsoever Things are *true*, and *honest*, and *just*, and *pure*, and *lovely*, and *of good Report*; to persuade them to mortify every inordinate Affection, and to attain those excellent Dispositions of Mind, which will make them resemble God, and best prepare them for future Happiness. In a word, to establish the Practice of these two great Virtues, *the Love of God*, and the *Love of our Neighbour*, upon these two excellent Principles, of *Faith in God*, as the Rewarder of those that seek him, and *Faith in Jesus Christ*, as the Saviour and Judge of Mankind.

Such is the *Nature* and *End* of Christ's Miracles, and in this *Manner* were they performed: But where now (if we may be allowed to ask) is the great Similitude between what *Apollonius* is said to have done, and them? y The History of *Apollonius* (as it is recorded by *Philostratus*) has no other *Voucher*, than his Servant *Damis*, a weak and ignorant Person, (as the Historian himself confesses,) and consequently very capable of being imposed upon by the artful Juggles of his Master. But, besides the Weak-

Compared with the pretended Miracles of *Apollonius*.

Weakness of such Authority, the pretended Miracles of *Apollonius* are, for the most part, *ridiculous*, unworthy the Character of a Prophet, and (as the learned *Photius* speaks) *full of Follies and monstrous Tales*. In the highest Instance of his miraculous Power, *viz. his raising a dead Woman to Life again*,² the Historian suspects (as he says the Company did) that there was some Confederacy and Collusion in the Matter; but, if even it were not so, the *Doctrines* he taught, and the Zeal he professed for the *Pagan Idolatry*, together with his excessive Pride, Ambition, and vain Affectation of divine Honours, are a plain Indication, that his Miracles were false, and his most surprizing Performances, either the Effects of *Magick*, or downright Cheat or Imposture.

Of *Vespasian*.

Tacitus indeed tells of two Cures; one of a *Blind*, and the other of a *Lame* Person, which *Vespasian* pretended to work at *Alexandria*: But whoever reflects on the Situation of his Affairs at that Time, will perceive some Reason to suspect a Collusion. He was now in a Dispute with himself what to do, whether to assume the *Roman Empire*, or restore the antient Form of Government, a *Common-wealth*: The Restoration

² *Vid. Vit. Apol. L. 4. c. 16.*

tion of the *latter* was what *Dion*, and *Euphrates*, two eminent Philosophers, advised; but *Apollonius* (whom he likewise consulted upon this Occasion) with great Vehemence, persuaded the contrary, and (being himself accustomed to such Artifices) might, not improbably, suggest to *Vespasian* the Necessity of some Miracle or other, in order to recommend him to the People, *as a Person highly favoured by the Gods.*

And indeed, if we consider, what an *obscure* Person, and of what mean Original *Vespasian* was, there seems to be the greater Reason, why *Apollonius*, and others of that Party, should think of some expedient or other to raise him a Reputation in the World, answerable to the new Station of Life, they had advised him to accept: And whoever considers farther, ^a what various Artifices were about this time used, to procure an Opinion of *Divinity* in the *Emperors*, will not much wonder that such Reports should be spread of them, or that certain Persons should be suborned to feign such Distempers, and then give themselves out to be cured by them. But allowing the Cures to be real, yet, since they were Things exceeding the Power of any created Being, they could

M not

^a *Stillington's Orig. Sac. æ. p. 171.*

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M not

^a *Stillington's Orig. Sac. æ. p. 171.*

not be affected by *Serapis*, the false God or *Dæmon*, who is said to prescribe them: They must be the Work of an *omnipotent* Hand, and might perhaps be *providentially* intended, to give some *dignity* and *superior* Character to *Vespasian*, as a Person, who, in Conjunction with his Son *Titus*, was appointed by God to be a signal Instrument of the divine Vengeance on the *Jewish* Nation.

But however this be, and whether these Cures were true or false; since, in Consequence of them, *Vespasian* never pretended to any *divine Commission*, nor to establish any new Worship or Doctrine; since, the only use he made of them was purely *political*, and to recommend himself, with greater Advantage, to the Favour of the People: The Case is very plain, that they can never come up to any Resemblance of our Saviour's *miraculous* Works, which were performed on purpose to establish his Authority, and to evince him to be a Prophet sent from God; to which Character the *Roman Emperor* (however some *sycophant Jews* might endeavour to flatter him with it) never *of himself* made the least Pretension.

And

And, if what the *Roman Emperor* did (even upon the best Supposition) falls

falls

falls infinitely short of what is recorded of our Saviour; the Competition is so very little between the Stroker *Grea-track*, and him, that nothing, but either gross Ignorance, or Malice, could have formed so unjust a Comparison. In his own ^b Original Letter, which is still preserved in the *Bodleian Library*, *Grea-track* thinks more modestly of himself; he makes no mention of his healing all kinds of Diseases, much less of *restoring any decays of Nature*. The *King's-evil*, and some few Distempers more, he pretended to Cure by a divine Impulse; but, failing sometimes herein (as ^c a just Examiner of his Pretensions tells us) he was obliged to fly to the Assistance of *Physick*, and *Chirurgery*; to use Plasters and proper Medicines, and that, frequently too without Success. His usual Method was, to *chafe*, and *rub*, with some Violence, the part affected, and, in some Cases, to pinch the Ulcers very severely, by which means he might perhaps remove some few Indispositions from one part into another, or even quite out of the Body, by *insensible Perspiration*; ^d but what is all this,

M 2

when

^b This Letter was sent to Dr. Hall, Bishop of Chester, An. 1665. ^c David Lloyd, in his Book entitled, *Wonders no Miracles*, An. 1666. ^d Bishop Smallbroke's Viud. p. 27.

when compared with the numerous and lasting Effects of one powerful Word of our Lord, either present or absent; of his immediately healing the most inveterate and incurable Distempers, and restoring, not only the greatest decays of Nature, but even Life it self? Nothing at all: and therefore to sum up the Argument thus far pursued.

Since the power of working Miracles in Christ was so vastly great, that it can be supposed to proceed from no other Cause, than a Communication from God, and yet, to imagine that God would communicate any part of his Power, to give Sanction and Countenance to an *Impostor*, is a Thing repugnant to his sacred Attributes; since God has not left us without means, either from the *Works* themselves, and the *Manner* of doing them, or from the *Persons* themselves, and the *End* for which they do them, to distinguish between the true Prophet and the Impostor, the real Miracles of the one, and the *lying Wonders* of the other; and, lastly, since all the Signs and Characters of true Miracles concur in the Works of Jesus, but, on the contrary, violent Suspicions of Trick and Artifice, at least, an *Inferiority*, that will admit of no manner of Comparison, in such as are named in competition
with

with him: It must needs follow, that the Miracles of our Blessed Saviour were not only *a good Proof of his Divine Authority*; but (what is to be farther prov'd) *such very Miracles in Kind*, as the *Messiah* (whenever he came into the World) was pre-ordained to do.

The 35th Chapter of *Isaiab's* Prophecy, ('tis generally agreed) relates to the *Messiah*, and that his coming, his Performances, and the Progress of his Kingdom are there describ'd in pretty lively Colours. The Prophet indeed has employ'd a variety of Stile in its Composition: he begins with the *Figurative*,^c *Let the Wilderiness and the solitary Place be glad; let the Desert rejoyce, and blossom as a Rose, &c.* then he descends to the *Plain*, and literal, ^f *say to them, that are of a fearful heart, be strong, fear not, behold your God will come with Vengeance, even God with a Recompence, he will come, he will come, and Save you, for the Eyes of the blind shall be open'd, &c.* and then he rises again in his usual *Metaphors* and *Allusions*, ^f *In the Wilderiness shall waters break out, and streams in the Desert, and the parched Ground shall become a Pool, and the thirsty Land Springs of Water, &c.* But whoever considers the nature of *Prophetical* Writings, how

The 35th
Chapter
of *Isaiab*
consider-
ed.

M 3

various

° Ver. 1. ! Ver. 7. ¢ Ver. 6, 7

various they are in their *Matter*, how bold in their *Figures*, and how very uncertain in their *Transitions*, cannot be under any Surprize, that the Characters of the *Messiah* should be sometimes more exprefs and *literal*, sometimes wrapt up in high *Oriental* Figures, and *Enigmatical* Allusions, and sometimes intermix'd with the Affairs of the feveral Ages, in which their Authors wrote ; but should rather be induc'd to think, that a continued and uniform *Narrative*, without any Intermixture of this kind, would be a *Solæcism* in *Prophetical* Compositions, and expose them to the like Objections, that *Porphery* once made against those of *Daniel*, for being too plain and too literal, viz. That they were an *Historical Account* rather of *Things past*, than any *Predictions of Things to come*.

In which
Sense the
Jews took
it.

Tho' therefore the variety of Stile, and mixture of Matter, and other Causes of Obscurity, were much greater, than is pretended ; yet, that these Considerations ought not to exclude the *literal* Sense of those Passages, which relate to the Works of the *Messiah*, is plain from the Opinion of the *ancient Jews*, who very frequently tell us, that ^h *when the Messiah cometh, he will open the Eyes* of

^h Targum on Isa. xiii. 1, 6, 7.

of the blind, and that ⁱ all sorts of Leprosies shall be healed in his Days; is plain from the Notions of the Jews in our Saviour's Time, who, upon seeing him do such Miracles, as *Isaiah* here foretold, ^k glorified the God of Israel, and said, this is of a Truth the Prophet that should come into the World; and (what is more) is plain from the use and application, that our Lord himself makes of them: For how much soever other Interpreters may disagree in the Acceptation of any Passage, relating to the *Messiah*, ^l all ambiguity ought certainly to cease, after it hath been determin'd to one Sense, by the Authority of a Person, working such Miracles, as could proceed from no less a Principle, than the Spirit of God. Let us then consider a little what the Occasion of our Saviour's Application, was.

^m Upon the Report of our Lord's Miracles, which had now over-spread all *Judæa*, *John* the Baptist, being then in Prison, sent two of his Disciples to know whether he was the *promis'd Christ*. *John*, who had so often given an ample Testimony of our Saviour, could not be ignorant of his Divine Mission; and therefore the Meaning of his sending, was, not to inform himself, but to give

In what Sense our Lord applied it.

M 4 his

ⁱ *Vajikra Rab.* on *Lev.* xiv. 2. ^k *Matth.* xv. 21.
^l *Bp. Chandler's Def.* p. 413. ^m *Luke* vii. 16, &c.

his Disciples an Opportunity of being satisfied from his own Mouth and Actions. *At that Hour* (as the Historian informs us) ⁿ *Jesus had cur'd many of their Infirmities, and Plagues, and to many, that were blind, had given Sight, when the Disciples of John address themselves to him in Words, taken from the Prophet Isaiah, ° Art thou he that should come, or look we for another Saviour? To which our Lord (pointing very probably to the Objects he had healed) replies in the very next Words of the Prophet, Go your way, and tell John what Things you have seen and heard, how the blind see, the lame walk, the Lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the Gospel preached unto them, and blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me. Can any thing be more plain, than that our Saviour intended the Disciples should understand him in a literal Sense? Any thing more incongruous, than that he should refer them to certain Spiritual and Allegorical Cures for Conviction, and dismiss them at last with some such Mystical Harangue as this.*

The Absurdity of a contrary Sense.

“ The Baptist, I find, has sent you
 “ to enquire of me, whether I am the
 “ true Messiah, and many Proofs of my
 “ Power

† Bp. Chandler's Defence, p. 436. ° Isa. xxxv. 4.

“ Power you have seen in the *Objects*,
“ that at present stand before you; but
“ let not these seeming Miracles deceive
“ you. That *blind* Man, whose Sight
“ I have restored, that *Lame*, that *Le-*
“ *per*, that *dead* Person, to whom I have
“ given Soundness, and Limbs, and
“ Life itself, are not *really* and *actually*
“ cur’d. Whatever I do of this kind, is
“ only by way of *Figure* and *Allegory*,
“ to denote my much greater Perform-
“ ances, in *curing Mens Errors*, and
“ *Ignorance*, and *want of intellectual*
“ *Knowledge of God*, and *his Providence*,
“ *by adhering to the Letter of the Scrip-*
“ *tures*; in curing the Lameness and In-
“ firmities of their Minds, the unclean-
“ ness of their Hearts and Affections,
“ and in *raising them*, in short, *from*
“ *the Death of Sin*, unto a *Life of Right-*
“ *teousness*. These are Performances
“ that do truly denote the *Messiah*; but
“ these I shall not attempt to do, until
“ my *Second and Spiritual Advent*, un-
“ til the Time of *the Evangelical Sab-*
“ *bath*: and therefore go and tell your
“ Master, ’tis to *that* time I refer him
“ for a *proper* and *authentick* Proof of
“ my *Mission*.

After such a strange and unaccounta-
ble Speech as this, what Notions, I pray,
must the Disciples of *John* have of our
Saviour’s

Saviour's *Intellects*? And yet this, and no other is the Sense of his Reply, upon the Supposition, that his Miracles are to be understood not in a *literal*, but *mystical Sense* only; whereas, upon a contrary Supposition, the Reply will be rational, satisfactory, and convincing:

‘ P Ye come to enquire, whether I be
 ‘ the *Messiah*, or Saviour of the World,
 ‘ whom the Prophet *Isaiab* writes of;
 ‘ ye see me do the same Miracles, which
 ‘ *Isaiab* foretold the *Messiah* should do;
 ‘ and therefore, upon the Evidence and
 ‘ Conviction of these, ye may return
 ‘ assured that *I am he*.

External
 Miracles
 proper for
 the *Messiah*.
 ah.

The Question then is not, whether *bodily* or *spiritual* Cures are the more wonderful and *godlike* Operations, but, whether *real* and *external* Miracles, or such as are *spiritual* and *allegorical* only, were, at this time, proper for our Saviour to exhibit, in order to prove himself to be the promised *Messiah*. *Mystical* Miracles, and the Cure of Diseases that are purely *spiritual*, are perceivable only by an *omniscient* Eye; they are mere *Non-entities* to a common Spectator, and affect him no more, than if they were none at all; but a real Miracle pierces quite through the

‘ Bp. Chandler's Defence, p. 437. ‘ Stanhope's Ep. & Gosp. vol. 2. p. 69.

the Soul, strikes all the Faculties at once, and by offering it self to our bodily Senses, becomes an Argument for the meanest Capacity to judge of. Without disputing then the Point of Preference between *internal* and *external* Operations, the plain Case is, that, since our Saviour's Business was to convince the People of his divine Mission, there could be no possibility of doing this, without exhibiting some Sign or other, that was *external* and *visible*: He might have talked of his *mystical* and *allegorical* Cures to Eternity, and yet not made one Profelyte; the Question, the untoward Question would have still returned upon him, Master, *What Sign shewest thou, that we may see, and believe?*

“ These refined and airy Notions of
 “ *spiritual Diseases* and *mystical Cures*,
 “ we are not all acquainted with;
 “ they are not the proper Evidences
 “ whereby the Prophets of Old proved
 “ their divine Mission; *Our Fathers did*
 “ *eat Manna in the Wilderness*, and
 “ many were the Wonders, which *Moses*
 “ *wrought in the Sight of all the People*;
 “ what we want therefore of thee is *ocular*
 “ *Demonstration*, and to be con-
 “ vinced immediately by some real and
 “ substantial Miracle, not by those di-
 “ stant

“stant and visionary Things, which
 “will not happen until thy *second and*
 “*spiritual Advent*, that thou art in reali-
 “ty a *Messenger sent from God*.

The Absurdities of
 the contrary
 Supposition.

And indeed, if we consider the Effects of our Saviour's Miracles, and the many immediate *Convictions* they occasioned, we must needs be ashamed of this *allegorical* Notion. For can we suppose, [†] that, when the People were amazed to see the stupendious Things he did, they were really amazed at nothing? That, when they asked one another, whether the *Messiah*, *when he came, would do greater Works than these*, they did not mean *real*, but only *imaginary* Works? That, when the Multitudes came to be healed, upon seeing the marvellous Cures he wrought on others, they had really seen nothing to encourage them to come? That, when the *Leper* came to thank him for his Mercies in healing him, he was not *really* healed, but came to return Thanks for nothing? Or that when the *Jews*, fearing the Success of his Miracles, called a Council, in order to prevent it, they were afraid of *Shadows* only, and properly consulted about nothing? [†] These and many more Conclusions, which follow upon the wild Notion of Miracles wholly

[†] Bp. Gibson's first pastoral Letter, p. 33. [†] Page 35.

wholly *mystical* and *allegorical*, without any *literal* Meaning, are such gross and shocking Absurdities, that nothing, one would think, but ^v either great *Weakness* of *Understanding*, or great *Disorder* of *Mind*, strong Affectation of *Singularity*, or very strong *Prejudices* against the *Christian* Religion, could lead a Man into; and therefore to sum up the other Branch of this Argument.

Since the 35th Chapter of *Isaiab's* Prophecy is supposed, by all Interpreters, to relate to the *Messiah*, and, notwithstanding some *figurative* Passages in it (a Thing very common in *prophetick* Writings) was, both by the *Tradition* of the *ancient Jews*, the *Sense* of the *Jews* in our Saviour's Time, and the *Use* which our Saviour himself makes of it, thought to denote, in a true and *literal* Sense, the Actions and Miracles of the *Messiah*: Since many of our Saviour's Miracles were of the same Kind and Character, with what the Prophet ascribes to the *Messiah*, and, being outward and visible Works, were the only proper Evidences of his divine Commission and Authority: Since the Notion of mystical and invisible Miracles (besides the strange and *chimerical* oddness of it) is attended with many Absurdities, and

The sum
of this o-
ther part of
the Argu-
ment.

Contra-

Contradictions to Scripture; makes our Saviour's Appeal to his Works impertinent, and his Answer to the Disciples of *John* ridiculous; justifies the *Jews* in their Demand of more Signs, and condemns the Judgment of such, as were converted upon no better Evidence; besides, that it destroys at once all Arguments in behalf of Christianity drawn from Miracles, ^w since Miracles can be no Testimony at all, if they be not *true* and *real*: Since the Arguments, I say, on the one Side are so clear, and the Absurdities and Contradictions on the other so gross and palpable, it must necessarily follow, that our blessed Saviour, in ^x *healing all manner of Sickness, and all manner of Diseases among the People*, according to the Prophecies concerning the Messiah, *did*, in reality, *the Miracles of the Messiah*, and consequently, *came with a Divine Authority to found and introduce a Religion into the World*.

^w Bp. Gibson's first Past. Letter; p. 25. ^x Matt. iv. 23.

S E C T.



S E C T. IX.

Of the Allegorical Fathers, and their Authority.

“ BUT, in this Controversy concern- *The Ob-*
 “ ing the Sense of Jesus’s Miracles, *jections.*
 “ our safest way is to have recourse to
 “ the Authority of the *Fathers*; those
 “ holy, venerable, and learned Preach-
 “ ers of the Gospel, in the first Ages of
 “ the Church, who took our Religion
 “ from the Hands of the *Apostles* and
 “ *Apostolick* Men; who died some of
 “ them, and suffer’d for the *Doctrine*
 “ they taught; who *professedly* and *con-*
 “ *fessedly* were endu’d with divine and
 “ *extraordinary* Gifts of the Spirit, and,
 “ consequently, cannot be supposed to
 “ be *Corrupters* of Christianity, or
 “ Teachers of *false Notions* concerning
 “ the Miracles of Christ, or so much
 “ as *mistaken* about the *Apostolical* and
 “ *Evangelical* Sense and Nature of them.
 “ Now all these holy and learned Men
 “ (as it were with one Consent) agree,
 “ that the Scriptures of the *new*, as
 “ well as the *old* Testament, are to be
 “ inter-

“ interpreted in an *allegorical* Sense;
 “ that, what ever Jesus did *in the Flesh*,
 “ was but *Typical* and *Symbolical*, of
 “ what he would do in the *Spirit*; and
 “ that the several *bodily* Diseases, which
 “ he healed, were no other than *Figures*
 “ of the *Spiritual* Diseases of the Soul.
 “ And, accordingly, they observe, that
 “ the several Persons, said to be raised
 “ by Jesus, were, in all Ages, an *Em-*
 “ *blem* of such as are *dead* in Trespasses
 “ and Sin, and, by the Power of divine
 “ Grace, *quicken’d* to a Life of Righ-
 “ teousness; that the several *Paralyticks*
 “ he cur’d, were an *Image* of Persons,
 “ *dissolute* in their Morals, and *unstable*
 “ in their Faith and Principles; and
 “ that the two Women, one with her
 “ *Issue of Blood*, and the other with her
 “ *Spirit of Infirmary*, were *Parabolical*,
 “ either of the Church’s *Impurity* and
 “ *Corruption*, in point of *Faith* and *Man-*
 “ *ners*, or of her adherence to the *lite-*
 “ *ral Interpretations* of the Scriptures, so,
 “ as not to raise herself to the Contem-
 “ plation of their *Spiritual* and *Sublime*
 “ Meaning. Nay, they reject the *lite-*
 “ *ral*, and adopt the *mystical* Meaning,
 “ in several other Instances. The *Mar-*
 “ *riage in Cana in Galilee*, with them
 “ is a Type of the Conjunction of Christ
 “ and his Church, where Christ is the
 “ *Bride*

“ *Bridegroom, and Moses the Governour*
 “ *of the Feast: His Transfiguration on*
 “ *the Mount, is an Image and Exhibi-*
 “ *tion of our future and celestial Glory ;*
 “ *and his casting the Buyers and Sellers*
 “ *out of the Temple, a Figure and Re-*
 “ *semblance of his future Ejection of*
 “ *such selfish Ecclesiasticks out of the*
 “ *Church, as make Gain and Merchan-*
 “ *dize of the Word of God. In short,*
 “ *if we will adhere to the Sense of the*
 “ *Fathers, we must be oblig’d to say,*
 “ *That the four Gospels are, in no*
 “ *Part, a literal Story, but a System of*
 “ *mystical Philosophy, or Theology ;*
 “ *that the History of Jesus’s Life, as*
 “ *recorded by the Evangelists, is an*
 “ *Emblematical Representation of his*
 “ *Spiritual Life in the Soul of Man,*
 “ *and his outward Miracles, Figures of*
 “ *his more mysterious Operations.*

It can never be denied indeed, but that great Respect and Veneration is due to the Authority of the *Fathers*, and that those especially, who lived in the earliest Ages of *Christianity*, are highly beneficial to us in many Respects. ^a They are proper *Witnesses* of the Truth of the Miracles of Jesus, after the strictest Enquiries made about them, and of the Au-
 N thority

The Re-
 spect due
 to the Fa-
 thers, and
 why.

^a Bp. Smallbrooke’s Vind. p. 123.

thority of those *Books*, which the Church receiv'd as *Sacred*, and wherein the Account of those *Facts* was recorded. They are proper *Witnesses* of the Miracles wrought in the Church, and of the *Gifts of the Spirit*, which (as they inform us) continu'd in the *Second Century*. They instruct us in several *Usages*, not so plainly express'd in Scripture; the Observation of the *Lord's Day*, the three Orders of the *Clergy*, the Government of the Church by *Bishops*, &c. And they give us an Account of the Books, successively received into the *Canon* of Scripture, and by what means they have been preserv'd *uncorrupt*, and transmitted *pure* to future Ages. Nay, they are likewise of great use to us in relation to the *Doctrines* of the Church, for they acquaint us what the *System* of the *Catholic Faith* then was; and, in regard to the *Exposition* of Scripture, must be allow'd to have no small Advantage, in that they were nearer the Fountain itself. But the Fathers, we must know, came but *late* to the Exposition of the Scripture; except the imperfect *Commentaries* of *Origen*, very little was wrote, at least, very little has descend- ed to us, that was wrote, before the *fourth Century*, when a *false Taste*, and the Influence of some *great Examples*,
drew

drew many more into the *modish* (which was then the *allegorical*) way of Writing.

^b *Origen* was the first that distinguish'd himself this Way, for which Reason he is not unjustly stil'd, *The Father of mystical Interpreters*; nor is it improbable (what *Porphyry*, cited by ^c *Eusebius*, tells us) "That being conversant in the Writings of *Cheræmon* the *Stoick*, who explain'd the *Egyptian Hieroglyphicks*) and of *Cornutus* (a *Stoick* too, who adapted the *Greek Mythology* to the Knowledge of Nature) he might learn from them the Art of allegorizing the Scriptures, agreeably to the Customs of the *Greeks* in explaining their *Mysteries*." 'Tis certain, that the *Platonick* Philosophy was then in high Esteem; and, having some Notions not altogether unlike Christian Doctrines, was become the popular Study. *Origen*, by his Works, shews what Acquaintance he had with Books of this kind; and as their Manner was to deal much in *Allegory*, 'tis very presumeable, that his Familiarity with them might have some Influence on his *Mystical* Expositions of the Scripture: But this is not all.

The Origin of Allegorical Interpretations.

N 2

" The

^b Bp. *Smallbrooke's* Vind. p. 26. ^c *Euseb. Hist. Eccl. L. 6. c. 19.*

“ The *Jewish* Rabbins (as ^d *Mai-*
 “ *monides* tells us) were mightily delight-
 “ ed with *Allegories*, and made fre-
 “ quent use of them; not that they
 “ were of Opinion, that the *Allegorical*
 “ Interpretation was the true Sense of
 “ the Scripture, but because it had some-
 “ thing *Enigmatical* in it, that was very
 “ pleasant and entertaining.” * *Philo*
 the *Jew* was a great Artist of this kind,
 and the first indeed, according to the
 Opinion of *Photius* (the great Critick of
 the *Ancients*) who taught the Christians
 the way of Allegorizing the Scriptures.
Clement of *Alexandria* greatly cultivated
 this *mystick* Art in his Writings; and 'tis
 certain he deriv'd it from *Plato*, because
 he not only imitates, but transcribes
 him very largely, in several Places of
 his Works. Now it is very well known
 that *Clement* was *Origen's* Master, and
 therefore it is no wonder, that his Ex-
 ample and Institutions, falling in with a
 Temper naturally delighted with the
Platonick way, should give an *Allegorical*
 Turn to his Thoughts; nor is it at all
 strange, that such a Person, as *Origen*,
 who, by his *vast*, but *irregular*
 Wit, was peculiarly suited to the Na-
 ture of *mystical* Exposition, and, by his
 uncom-

^d *Mer. Nevoch.* p. 437. * *Bp. Smallbrooke's Vind.*
 p. 94.

uncommon Learning, knew so well how to support the most *lively*, tho' frequently *ill-grounded* Imaginations, in a *Path* so pleasant and so popular, should have so many Followers.

It is to be observ'd farther, that publick Expositions of Scripture were, at this time, the only Sermons in use; ^{Why encouraged.} and therefore the *Fathers*, willing, on these Occasions, to excite in the People a Spirit of Piety and Devotion, did not confine themselves to the bare Letter, but endeavour'd, upon the Letter, to raise *Spiritual* Meanings, and to allegorize upon them, by way of moral Application. They observ'd too, ^{that} such Expositions gave an agreeable Entertainment to *popular* Auditories, and warmly affected their Imaginations; and thereupon were encourag'd to pursue them, not only in regard to the Miracles of our Saviour, but almost all the *Historical Facts*, either in the *old* or *new* Testament. Great Care however was taken to inform their Hearers, that these *mystical* Expositions did not vacate the *literal* Sense of the Scriptures; that the reality of *Facts* still stood firm; nay, that it was the proper Foundation, upon which they raised their *Allegories*, and without

N 3 which,

¹ Bp. Gibson's first Past. Lett. p. 28. ² Bp. Smallbrooke's Vindtc. p. 115.

which, they must necessarily degenerate into Trifles, or rather vanish into nothing. And therefore^h they never imagin'd, that their Expositions should be so far abus'd, as to patronize a Separation of their *Allegories* from the Things they allegoriz'd, and, much less, to favour the Substitution of their Allegories in the very room of the *Facts*, which, for good and wholsome Purposes, they thus explain'd.

Even Origen acknowledges the *literal* Sense of Miracles.

Origen (as we said before) was one of the first, and most noted Writers in this way, and, in some Places, he seems to give a manifest Preference of the *mystical* to the *literal* Interpretation, and well he might, in that it suited his Genius better: ⁱ but so far is he from not believing, and allowing the Miracles, and other Actions of our Saviour's Life, in a *literal* Sense, that, in many Parts of his Book against *Celsus*, (which consists not of *popular* Discourses, but of just and sober Reasonings) he directly argues from them in Defence of Christianity. Thus, in answer to *Celsus's* Boastings of the Precepts and Discipline of the *Greeks*, he urges, that *Christianity* has a more divine Demonstration, which the *Apostle* calls *the Demonstration of the Spirit and*
of

^h Bp. *Smallbrook's* Vind. p. 119. ⁱ Bp. *Gibson's* first Past. Letter, p. 29.

of Power ; and he explains *Power* to be the Miracles of *Christ*, which, says he, ^k we believ'd to have been wrought, as from many other Arguments, so particularly from this, that the Footsteps of the same Power do still appear. To this purpose ^l he takes Notice, that both *Moses* and *Jesus* did wonderful Works, and such as exceeded humane Power ; and then expostulates with the *Jews*, for believing the Things which *Moses* wrought, though recorded singly by himself, and rejecting the Miracles of *Christ*, upon the Testimony of his Disciples. In like Manner, ^m speaking of *Moses* and *Christ*, he observes, that *Christ* was to overthrow the Customs, in which the People had been Educated, and to deal with a Nation, that had been taught to require Signs and Wonders, and therefore had at least as great need to shew them in order to gain Belief, as *Moses*, who had not those Difficulties to overcome : And lastly, ⁿ to prove that *Jesus* was the Son of God, he urges his healing the *Lame*, and the *Blind*, according to the *Prophecy* concerning

N 4

^k L. 1. p. 5. Edit. Spenc.

^l L. 1. p. 34.

^m L. 2. p. 91, 92.

ⁿ L. 2. p. 87, 88.

cerning him; he shews the reality of what the *Evangelists* relate, of his raising Persons from the dead, and why he raised no more; and then adds, that his Miracles were intended not only to be *Figures* and *Symbols*, but also the Means of converting Multitudes to the *Christian Faith*; whereby he plainly acknowledges the *literal*, as well as the *allegorical* meaning of them.

Nay, had I Leisure to gratify the Curious, I might shew out of his other Works, that are not written with the like Exactness, that, in talking of our Saviour's Miracles, he adheres to their *literal*, as well as *figurative* Meaning: " For, ^p
 " it all the sorts of Diseases, *says he*,
 " which our Saviour cured among the
 " People, bear any Relation and Ana-
 " logy to the various Diseases of the
 " Soul, it is very reasonable to apprehend, that, by the *Paralyticks* in the
 " Gospel, those Persons are intimated,
 " who have a *moral* sort of Palsy in their
 " Souls": and therefore he affirms,
 " that, ^q whatever cures Jesus is said
 " to perform among the People, especially those, that are mentioned by the *Evangelists*, were then wrought, that those
 " Persons

^p Orig. Comment. in *Matth.* c. 17. ^q Ibid. in *Matth.* c. 15.

“ Persons might believe in him, who
 “ had not otherwise believed, unless
 “ they had seen his Signs and Won-
 “ ders.

‘ After all, it must be acknowledged, But is blamed for being too allego-
 rical. that *Origen*, and some others, indulged themselves farther in the *allegorical* Way, than was consistent with sober Reasoning, or authorized by any Example in Scripture. *St. Paul* indeed in his Epistles, has allegorized several Passages of the *Jewish* Law and History, ‘ but it must be considered, that such an *Accommodation* was not only very agreeable to the *Jews* and other *Oriental* Nations, but receives likewise great Weight and Authority from the supposed Influence of the *divine* Spirit, which dictated it at first. If *St. Paul*, indeed, was inspired (as is justly believed by all *Christians*) with the Knowledge of what, in the *Old Testament*, was originally intended to be *Significative* and *Emblematical* of some things future, and accordingly expounded them, great regard is certainly due to what he delivered in this Manner to the Church: But, the like deference is not to be paid to the mystical Interpretations of others, who have not the same divine Inspiration,

‘ *Bp. Gibson’s* first Past. Lett. p. 31. ‘ *Bp. Small-broke’s* Vind. p. 107.

tion, yet pretend to *allegorize* in Matters, that cannot require it. ^t *The Law of Moses*, indeed, (as the Apostle tells us) *had a Shadow of good Things to come*, and was entirely *typical* of the Gospel; but the Gospel is stiled ^u *the Truth*, or Completion of Things under the Law, *whose Body, or Substance, is Christ*: And therefore we cannot but think it a derogation to the Perfection of the Gospel, and inconsistent with its being the Completion of the Law, that it should still be thought capable of being allegorized a-new, and equally *so* with the Law.

This allegorizing is contrary to Scripture, and the practice of the Apostles.

It is a false and injurious Commendation then, to say, that *the Life of Jesus is, in no part, a literal Story, but a System of mystical Philosophy or Theology*. The Apostle, I am sure, gives us a different Character of it, when he tells the *Corinthians*, ^w that, *after the World by Wisdom knew not God, it pleased God, by the Foolishness of Preaching, to save them, that believe*; and therefore he declares to them his own Practice: ^x *And I, Brethren, when I came unto you, came not with Excellency of Speech, or of Wisdom, declaring unto you the Wisdom of God; for I determined not to know any Thing among*

^t Heb. ii. 1. ^u John i. 17. ^v 1 Cor. i. 21.
^x 1 Cor. ii. 1, &c.

mong you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified: And my Speech and my preaching was, not with enticing Words of Man's Wisdom, but in Demonstration of the Spirit and of Power; that your Faith should not be in the Wisdom of Men, but in the Power of God. ¹ For I delivered unto you, first of all, (that which I also received,) how that Christ died for our Sins, according to the Scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third Day, according to the Scriptures, and that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve; after this he was seen of above five hundred Brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain unto the present, but some are fallen asleep: After that, he was seen of James, then of all the Apostles, and last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of Time. ² Where is the Wise, where is the Scribe, where is the disputer of the World to unriddle this to us? For, according to the present Scheme, this is all Figure and Allegory; a parabolical Narrative, and emblematical Representation of the spiritual Life in the Soul of Man: And what pity it was, that the great Apostle of the Gentiles should be so faulty in his Office, as not to let us into the Knowledge of all this. On the contrary, he, like an hardy

Man, And of dangerous Consequence.

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 3, &c. ² Ib. i. v. 20.

Man, is not ashamed to justify himself; for, ^a *According to the Grace, which is given to me, says he, as a wise Builder, I have laid the Foundation, and another buildeth thereon; but let every Man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. Another Foundation can no Man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now, if any Man build upon this Foundation, Gold, Silver, precious Stones, Wood, Hay, Stubble, i. e. Notions and Inventions of his own, how gross, or how refined forever they be, his Work shall be manifest, and, if himself be saved, it shall be but upon a narrow escape, it shall be, so as by Fire.* So that according to the Sense of St. Paul, this humour of building upon the Scripture, or of fixing foreign Meanings to the plain *historical* Facts of the Gospel, is neither so *innocent*, nor so *safe* a Thing, as some may imagine. It is, at the best, destroying the proper Signification of Things, and giving a Licence to every wild and extravagant Fancy, to make the Word of God speak just what it pleases. And if this unluckily should be found to be *preaching of another Gospel* (as by this Way of Procedure, any thing may be so charged, as to lose every *Feature* it once had) what is the Sentence, that this Apostle
pro-

pronounces against the Promoters of it?

^b *If any Man or Angel, preach any other Gospel unto you, than what ye have received, let him be accursed.*

It is not then the Authority of great Names, that can justify us in what is unwarrantable in itself. If the Fathers have gone too far in their way of allegorizing, instead of being imitated, they ought to be blamed and censured by us, as freely, ^c as they were by some of their *Contemporaries*. But the Truth is, few, very few of the great Names of Antiquity have, as yet, appeared in this Controversy; not one, except *Origen*, of the first three hundred Years after Christ, but a long *Roll of Fathers* and Writers (*Spurious* and *Genuine* together) of the 4th, 5th, and following *Centuries*, far from ^d *having our Religion from the Hands of the Apostles, and apostolick Men, or from being endued with any divine and extraordinary Gifts of the Spirit*. And yet, as weak Authorities as they are, what uncommon Pains and Artifice has been us'd, by false Quotations, false Translations, and Interpolations of Words; by foisting in some Books, citing others as *Genuine* that are known to be *Spurious*, and, almost in every

How the Fathers have been treated and misapplied by Mr. Woolston.

^b Gal. i. 8, 9. ^c Vid. *Huet. Origeniana*, p. 170, &c. ^d Bp. Gibson's first Past. Lett. p. 28.

every Passage, either perverting, or suppressing the true Sense and Meaning of the Author, to make them come in to the Scheme; but all to no purpose. The Fathers are obstinate, and will not comply: They avow the *literal* Sense of the Scriptures, and declare unanimously, that, without the Supposition of its Reality, their Allegories would be mere *Castles in the Air*, and have no Foundation at all.

The Sum
and Con-
clusion of
this Ar-
gument.

Since then this Custom of *Allegorizing* Scripture owes its Original to the *Jews* and *Gentiles*, (no great Friends to the *Christian* Cause) and was afterwards indulged to gratify, in some measure, a depraved Taste, and extravagant Imagination; since no Authority can be produc'd for it in Scripture, but many Passages, out of St. *Paul's* Writings, to shew the danger and bold Presumption of it, as well as the necessary Duty of our adhering to the Plainness and Simplicity of the Gospel; since no Arguments, in its Vindication, can be drawn from the Writings of the ancient Fathers, forasmuch as the greatest Masters and Admirers of it, have always acknowledg'd a *literal* Sense, and such as are produc'd to the contrary, upon a proper Examination, have been found to do the same;
“ Remember, Reader, once for all, (as
“ *Tertullian*

“ • *Tertullian* expresses it) that when we
 “ admit of any such Scriptural *Allegories*,
 “ the true *literal* Sense of the Scripture
 “ is not alter’d, tho’ the Circumstances,
 “ or State of the Case, receive a new
 “ Turn, and have a *Rhetorical* Appli-
 “ cation given to them.



S E C T. X.

Of CHRIST’S *driving the Buyers*
and Sellers out of the Temple.

“ **B**UT how can we help recurring The Ob-
 “ to the *mystical* Sense, when the jection.
 “ *literal* account of many of Jesus’s
 “ Miracles, implies such Improbabili-
 “ ties, Incredibilities, and gross Absur-
 “ dities, as are very dishonourable to
 “ the Name of Christ. The Miracle,
 “ for instance, of *his driving the Buyers*
 “ *and Sellers out of the Temple*, (as great
 “ an Exploit as some may think it) is
 “ certainly a very absurd and impro-
 “ bable Story. For, admitting there
 “ really was a *Market* kept in the
 “ Temple, (which our Divines, I be-
 “ lieve, will find some Difficulty to
 “ prove)

‘L. 3. §. 5. & L. 5. §. 4.

“ prove) yet where’s the great Sin, and
 “ Profanation of it, to buy and sell
 “ such Things in it, as were brought on
 “ purpose to be offer’d to God in Sacri-
 “ fice? But then, how any one, in
 “ the Form of a Man, and that a *despi-*
 “ *sed* Man too, should be able, with no-
 “ thing but a Whip in his Hand, to
 “ execute such an *heroick* Work, upon
 “ a great Multitude of People, who
 “ were none of them his Disciples, nor
 “ had any regard to him; who had,
 “ some of them, been injur’d, and suf-
 “ fer’d Damage in their *Wares*, and
 “ consequently must be suppos’d in a
 “ Disposition to resist him, is a thing
 “ incredible. But put the Case it were
 “ not so; for what End and Purpose he
 “ should now be so zealous against the
 “ Profanation of the Temple, when he
 “ himself, in a short time after (by the
 “ Hands of the *Romans*) ordered it to
 “ be destroyed and polluted, is some-
 “ thing so very *inconsistent*, that there is
 “ no way of accounting for it, but by
 “ supposing it a *Prophetical* and *Para-*
 “ *bolical Narrative* of somewhat to be
 “ done hereafter, more *Mysteriously*, and
 “ more *Wonderfully*, by him.

The Courts
 of the
 Temple
 describ’d.

A vulgar Reader indeed may think
 it very strange, that a *Market* should be
 kept

kept in a Church, or that *the Tables of Money-Changers, and the Seats of those that sold Doves*, should be permitted in the Temple: But we mistake the Matter much, if we suppose, that the Temple of *Jerusalem* was made like one of our Churches. ^a It did not consist of one single Edifice only, but had several Courts and Buildings. belonging to it. The first and most outward Court, which went by the Name of *the Mount of the Temple*, was a Square of 500 Cubits every way, containing several Buildings for different uses, and surrounded with Cloysters, supported by Marble Pillars. Next to this was the *Court of the Gentiles*, rang'd round with Cloysters, and separated from the other Courts with Stone Balustrades three Cubits high, with Pillars at certain Distances, upon which were engraven Exhortations to Purity and Holiness, and a Prohibition to all the *Gentiles*, and to such, as were *unclean*, to advance beyond them. Then follow'd the *Court of the Women*; after that the *great Court*, which was divided into two Parts, the *Israelites Court*, and the *Court of the Priests*, contiguous to which stood the Temple itself. This was the Order of the Building, but the

O *whole*

^a Vid. *Lamy & Beaufobre Intr.*

whole went under the general Name of the *Temple*.

The Place
where the
Market
was kept.

The *Jews* indeed did not place the same Sanctity in the *Court of the Gentiles*, as in other Parts of the Temple, and therefore it is less wonder that they permitted it to be employ'd to Purposes, that our Saviour condemn'd. ^b They found it almost necessary, that such, as liv'd at a considerable Distance from *Jerusalem*, instead of bringing living Creatures, should only bring Money with them, in order to purchase Sacrifices and Oblations there; and for the Convenience of this (as ^c a great Master of *Jewish* Learning tells us) there was always a constant Market in the Temple, in the Place which was called the *Shops*; where every day was sold Wine, Salt, Oil, and other Requisites to Sacrifices, as Oxen and Sheep, in the spacious *Court of the Gentiles*: and that the same Practice was in use, in the time of our Saviour's Ministry, we have the Testimony of the ancient *Jews* themselves. For, since in the *Babylonish Talmud* it is declared, ^d that *forty Years before the Temple was destroy'd, the great Council removed*
from

^b *Whitby* on *Matt. xxi. 12.*

^c *Lightfoot* on *Matt. xxi. 12.* Vol. 2. p. 224.

^d See *L'Empereur* on the *Codex Maddok.* p. 48, 49.

from the Place, where they us'd to assemble in the inner Court of the Temple, and sate among the Shops; *counting back forty Years from the Destruction of the Temple, we shall find, that this removal of the Sanhedrim was about three or four Years before this Action of our Saviour's happen'd; and, consequently, that in his Time there was a Place, called the Shops, which, according to the Description that the Jews give of them, were an open spacious Place, where Goods were Sold, and Money exchanged.

But how convenient soever this Merchandise might be for the Use of the Temple-Service, it was certainly a gross Profanation of the Place itself. For since the Court of the Gentiles was the only Place, wherein the Profelytes of the Gate (who came up to the Temple in great Numbers, especially at the Time of the Passover) were permitted to worship the God of Israel, it can hardly be imagin'd, but that the Drovers of Cattle, which were brought in there to be Sold, would not only crowd and incommode the Place, (which is a great Indecency) but that, in the midst of the bleatings of the Sheep, the lowings of the Oxen, and the hurry and bustle, necessarily occasion'd

O 2

by

* Dr. Pearce's Miracles Vindicated, part. 2. p. 10, &c.

by the other sort of Merchandise, the *Profelytes* would be sure to meet with no small Disturbance in their Devotions. ^f Nor wants there some Reason to perfume, that, the *Captains of the Temple*, and others, who had the Care and Direction of it, having let out part of the Court of the *Gentiles* for Profit and Advantage, and perhaps at excessive Rents, the *Sellers*, to make themselves amends for what they paid for their Shops and Stalls, insisted upon unjust and exorbitant Gains, for which we find them charg'd by our Saviour, as having made the *House of God*, not a Place of *Merchandise* only, but ^g a *Den of Thieves*.

Why *proper* for our
Lord to
redress it.

Now if the Permission of such Abuses may be allow'd to be a Profanation of the Temple, whoever considers what great Reverence was constantly paid to it, and what Titles of Honour and Respect are given it by God himself; how, under the *old Testament*, it is stiled ^h his *Sanctuary*, his *Dwelling*, his *Courts*, and *Palace*; his *Holy Mountain*, and the *Place which he had chosen out of all the Earth, to set his Name there*; and how the Apostle, under the *new*, declares it to have been ⁱ the *Figure of the Heavens*,
and

^f Pearce's Miracles Vindicated, p. 13. ^g Matth. ii. 13. ^h Psal. lxxxiv. 1, 10. Isa. lvi. 7. 2 Chron. xx. 9. Deut. xvi. 16. ⁱ Heb. ix.

and of that Seat, *not made with hands*, where the glorious Majesty of God more peculiarly resides : whoever considers this, I say, can, by no means, be induc'd to think, that a Reformation of such Abuses was any Instance of an intemperate Zeal in our Saviour; or that the Thing was less prudent, or less necessary to be done, because the Temple was shortly to be destroy'd, since every Place, which is set apart for *Divine Worship*, ought to be kept *Sacred*, and fit for that Use, as long as it is subsisting. In such a Case, we are to consider what Things are *now*, not what they are to be *hereafter*; for what would have been a Profanation of the Temple, had it been always to last, was equally a Profanation of it, tho' it was shortly to be destroy'd. The Action is the same under both Events, nor is it in the least alter'd by the Fate of the Place, where it happens to be done. * As well therefore may we enquire, why Jesus conform'd to the *legal* Service of the Temple, which, tho' as yet establish'd, was soon to be abolish'd, *viz.* by the more perfect Sacrifice of himself; as why he vindicated the Honour of God, that was profan'd in his own *House*, though that House was

Notwithstanding its ensuing Destruction.

O 3 after

* Bp. *Smallbrooke's* Vind. p. 148.

after some time, to be finally abandon'd and destroy'd.

Our Saviour, indeed, out of his Divine Knowledge, foretold the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, and, that the Time should come, when ^m *the abomination of Desolation*, (*i. e.* the Roman Army, which having for their Ensign the Emperor's Image, and coming with intent to lay waste their Country, could not but be detestable to the *Jews*) *standing in the Holy Place*: But by this *standing in the Holy Place*, from a parallel Passage in || *St. Luke*, is suppos'd, by * most Interpreters, to be meant no more, than the ⁿ *Army's encompassing the Holy City*. If we refer it however to the Destruction of the Temple, the Prediction of the Event does not *necessitate* its coming to pass; nor is our Saviour any more chargeable with the Consequence of it, than the Providence of God is with all the Slaughter, and Havock, and Devastation, which a Victorious Army makes in an Enemy's Country. The Destruction of the *Jewish* Nation was determin'd indeed in the Divine Counsel, but, according to the Account of their own ‡ *Historian*, they themselves were the Authors of their

^m *Mark* xiii. 14. || *Luke* xxi. 20. * *Vid. Hammond and Whitby in locum.* ⁿ *Dr. Pearce*, p. 14. ‡ *Jos. de Bell. Jud.* L. 8. c. 5. 9.

their own Calamity : and, in the particular Instance of the Burning of the Temple, not only themselves set fire to the Galleries thereof first, but even, when *Titus* had left them in quiet, and order'd his Guards to extinguish the Fire, they sallied out upon them, and hinder'd them ; and so (as the Historian tells us) *wrought the final Destruction of the Holy Place with their own Hands.*

But be that as it will ; since the Temple was, as yet, to stand full forty Years, and upwards, there could be no Incongruity in our Saviour's endeavouring to correct this Abuse of it ; and, considering the present Situation of Things, no Impossibility in him to effect it. For we must remember, that he was just now come up from *Bethany* to *Jerusalem*, in a sort of Royal and Triumphant Procession ; that he was attended on the Road, and into the City, with [°] *a very great Multitude*, nay, *with Multitudes, that went before, and followed after* ; that these all went along with him into the Temple, and proclaimed (as they had done on the Road) *Hosanna the Son of David* ; and that the Concourse, in short, was so great, that ^p *all the City was moved*, and even the chief Priests were

O 4 afraid

[°] Matt. xxi. 8, 9. ^p Ver. 46. Mark xi. 18. Luke xix. 48.

afraid of him, and of the People too, because *they took him for a Prophet, and were very attentive to hear him.* Now it is no hard matter to imagine, that the People, seeing our Saviour proceed to the Temple in this triumphant Manner, might happily call to Mind the Prediction of the Prophet *Malachi*, ¹ *The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his Temple, even the Messenger of the Covenant, in whom ye delight, and he shall purify the Sons of Levi, that they may offer to the Lord an Offering of Righteousness;* and that, from the Remembrance of this *Prophecy*, they might be encouraged to abet his Reformation of the Temple. * Nor is it to be doubted, but that a Conscience of Guilt in the Profaners themselves might, in some measure, contribute to their Submission and Acquiescence; even in the same manner, as his Enemies were *struck backwards* with the Sense of their own Guilt, as well as the Majesty of his Appearance, and *fell down to the Ground*, when they came to apprehend him in the Garden. † So that, in the whole, we are to consider our Saviour, in this Action, not in the Form of a *despised Man*, but of a triumphant *Monarch* rather, at the Head of an infinite

¹ Mal. iii. 1, &c. † Bp. *Smallbrooke's Vind.* p. 146. † Dr. *Pearce*, p. 15.

finite number of People, all rejoycing in the Completion of an ancient *Prophecy*, all acknowledging him for their *Messiah* and *King*, and thereupon ready to support him in any *Reformation*, that he should think proper to attempt.

And now to collect what has been said in this Answer. Since, by the Temple here, is meant the outer Court of it, or *Court of the Gentiles*, where undoubtedly were Shops, and Stalls, and several sorts of Merchandise, which must needs be a great *Profanation* of a Place, set apart for *religious* Worship; since the Honour and Reverence, due to the *House of God*, was Motive sufficient for our Saviour to attempt a Reformation of this Abuse; and, in his present triumphant Condition, he had Followers and Abettors enough to support him in such an attempt; the supposed *long* or *short* Continuance of the Temple (to whose Destruction our Saviour was not accessory) makes no Alteration in the Case; nor is there any Occasion, I think, to form *Invectives* against this Miracle, or to charge it with any *Absurdities* or *Incredibilities*.

The sum
of the
whole an-
swer.

S E C T.



S E C T. X I.

*Of his curing the DEMONIACKS,
and sending the Devils into the
Swine.*

The Ob-
jection.

“ **B**UT, suppose that the former
“ Miracle will bear the Test,
“ yet, what shall we say to the
“ Case of the *Demoniacks*, in the Coun-
“ try of the *Gadarens*, and that vast
“ number of *Devils*, which, to the De-
“ struction of other Mens Property, he
“ permitted to enter into the *Herd of*
“ *Swine* ? It looks a little oddly in-
“ deed, that these Madmen should have
“ their Habitation in the Tombs of a
“ Burying-ground, and that the People
“ of the Place should be so *inhumane*,
“ as to take no manner of Care or Pity
“ of them. If they were so exceeding-
“ ly fierce and outrageous, *that no Fetters*
“ *nor Chains could hold them*, nor any
“ Passenger go that Way, without be-
“ ing in danger of his Life, it certainly
“ would have been more adviseable,
“ and more lawful too, to have dis-
“ patched them : but to send the Devils
“ into

“ into the Herd of Swine, was a thing
“ impossible, because the *Jews*, who
“ inhabited the Place, were, by their
“ Law, not only prohibited to eat
“ Swine’s Flesh, but (after the Time
“ that *Antiochus* polluted the Temple
“ by the Sacrifice of an *Hog*) under the
“ Pain of an *Anathema*,[†] forbidden to
“ keep any in the Country. Nay, al-
“ lowing this Herd to belong, not to
“ the *Jews*, but the neighbouring *Gen-*
“ *tiles*, to whom it was lawful to eat
“ and keep Swine; yet, how will our
“ Divines be able to affoil the *Goodness*
“ and *Justice* of Jesus, in permitting so
“ large an Herd to be destroyed in this
“ Manner, and their Owners, by this
“ means, to become considerable Suffer-
“ ers? This one Consideration, in my
“ Opinion, is enough to set aside the
“ whole Miracle. But then, if we con-
“ sider, how common a thing (even ac-
“ cording to the Testimony of Jesus
“ himself) the Business of *Exorcism* was
“ among the *Jews*, we cannot but con-
“ clude, that his Talent of this kind
“ (even had it been much greater than
“ it really was) can never be deemed
“ a sufficient Proof of his *divine Autho-*
“ *rity*.

The

[†] *Spencer de Leg. Heb. p. 117.*

The Na-
ture of
Jewish
Tombs.

The Addition of the Word *Burying-ground* to the Text, is designed to mislead the Reader into a Conception of something resembling our *Church-yards*, in Cities and Towns; which, as they could afford but a bad Habitation for Madmen, would not fail of annoying the People perpetually, by having such fierce and disorderly Persons near them. ^v To set us right, therefore, in this Particular, it must be observed, that the *Tombs*, which the *Evangelist* here mentions, are said to be in *the Mountains*, and in *the Wilderness*: for the Custom of the *Jews* was, to have their *Tombs*, like so many little *Cells*, cut out in the sides of *Caverns*, and the hollow parts of *Rocks*, and *Mountains*, at some distance from the Towns, and usually in very loanly and desert Places. That many such *Tombs* remain in *Judæa*, even to this Day, we are assured from the Testimony of *Maundrel*, and other modern Travellers; and, that particularly, on the Coast of the Lake *Gennesareth*, which was the lower *Galilee*, and lay contiguous to *Gadara*, there were vast Caves and Dens under Ground, ^w *Josephus*, in his History, has not omitted to inform us. Nay, he tells us more-
over,

^v Dr. Pearce, part 2. p. 23. ^w De Bell. Jud. L. 2. c. 10.

over, that these Caves and hollow Rocks, were oftentimes made use of for *Retreat* and *Shelter*; and mentions whole Bands of Thieves and Robbers, who sometimes, for whole Months, took up their abode there, and, from thence made their Excursions and Depredations.

Mountains indeed, in our *cold* Coun-tries, afford no manner of Food or Sustainance; but, in those *warm* and *fruitful* Climates, the Case was otherwise. The *Baptist*, we find, liv'd in the Wilderness, on *Locusts* and *wild Honey*; and *Josephus*, in his own Life, tells us, that, when he was Young, he went into the Wilderness, to be instructed by one, who lived *there* upon what grew of itself, wild, and uncultivated: and therefore we have less Reason to wonder, that we find these *Demoniacks* in such melancholy Places, as were suited to their Complexions, and where they might find both *Shelter* from their Pursuers, and *Food* to sustain their Lives.

How the
Demoni-
acks might
livethere.

The *Gadarens* indeed seem not to be a People of much Humanity: The Request, which they make our Lord, * *To depart out of their Coasts*, after so signal a Mercy extended to two of their Country-men, gives us but a bad Notion of their Civility and Gratitude; but still it must

The Ga-
darens
Treatment
of them.

* Matth. viii. 34.

must be acknowledg'd, that they had taken some Care of these wretched Creatures. They had *often* (as the Story tells us) bound them *with Fetters and Chains*, but the Fetters and Chains (whatever they were) were not of strength enough for Men in their outrageous Condition; and therefore they got loose from their Keepers, and retreated to the Tombs and Mountains; where, when they were pursu'd, they probably hid themselves, and so eluded all the Diligence and Humanity of such, as endeavour'd to retake them. While they were alive however, there were still hopes of laying hold on them again, and perhaps of recovering them to their Senses; and this is a sufficient Reason why the *Gadarens* might not think fit to *dispatch them*.

A Description
of *Gadara*.

In what relates then to the Case of the *Demoniacs*, and their Circumstances, there seems to be no Incongruity in the sacred Story: and to clear, in like manner, our Saviour's Character from any Imputation, that may arise from the Destruction of the Swine, it may not be improper to observe, * that *Gadara* was a City on the other side *Jordan*, near the Lake *Gennesareth*, one of those Cities called *Decapolis*, and situate in that
Allotment,

* Dr. Pearce, P. 2. p. 26.

Allotment, which was made to the Tribe of *Manasseh*. *Pompey* indeed join'd it at first to the Province of *Syria*, but *Augustus* afterward gave it to *Herod*, tho' upon his Death, he annex'd it to *Syria* again ; by which means it was inhabited partly by *Jews*, and partly by *Syrians*, who were *Heathens*. Now it is a Thing very well known, that the *Heathens* us'd Swine, not only for Food, but for Sacrifices likewise ; and 'tis not improbable, that the *Jews* of that Country might be tempted to feed Swine, from the Profit they made, by selling them to their Heathen Neighbours. This was against a *Prohibition* of their Law, 'tis true, but Laws we know, are not always observ'd, and perhaps least of all at *Gadara*, which, being in the Extremity of the *Jewish* Territories, and under the *Jurisdiction* of *Heathens*, left the *Jews* without any restraint upon them, but that of *Conscience*, which is too frequently violated for the sake of Gain.

To bring the Matter then into a narrower Compass ; the Swine, which were destroy'd in consequence of the Permission, which our Saviour gave the evil Spirits to enter into them, belong'd either to the *Jews*, or to the *Gentiles* of *Gadara* : If they belong'd to the *Jews*, it cannot be denied, but that they were just-ly

Why our Saviour might permit the Destruction of the Swine.

ly punish'd, for breaking their own Laws and Constitutions. In *Josephus*, we find, an Edict of the Emperor *Augustus*, requiring the *Roman* Governours, in every Country where the *Jews* resided, to suffer them *to live according to such of their own National Laws, as were in force in Hyrcanus's time*; and from hence one may gather, that all Laws made in *Hyrcanus's* time were look'd upon by the *Jews*, as binding; otherwise, when they solicited the Emperor for this Edict in their Favour, they would have scarcely fix'd upon this Period for their Standard: And if the Laws in *Hyrcanus's* time were binding, then was the keeping of Swine a plain Violation of their Constitution, and justly punishable by our Saviour; because it was a receiv'd Maxim among the *Jews*, that any Person, invested with the Character of a *Prophet*, or acting by the Spirit of God, might, without the Assistance of a *Magistrate*, put the Laws in Execution against Offenders. What *Phineas* did to *Zimri*, and *Elijah* to the Priests of *Baal*, was by them look'd upon as Precedents in this Case; and therefore we, who acknowledge our Jesus to have been *more than a Prophet*, can never be at a Loss to account for his exercising

cising an Authority among the *Jews*, which (according to their own Confession) was allowable, even in the lowest of that *Order*.

But if the Heathens of *Gadara* were the Owners of the Swine, ^z 'tis very supposable, that they were guilty of some great Sin, which occasion'd the Loss of them; and the Conjecture is not amiss, that it was inflicted in order to cure them of their *Idolatrous* Worship of Dæmons, and to induce them to embrace the Gospel, by an Argument peculiarly adapted to them. For, when they saw our Saviour's Power over such a Multitude of Devils, exemplified in their possession of the Swine, (had they made a right Application of the Miracle) they cou'd not but perceive the Truth of the Gospel, and the Madness of their own worshipping such impure Spirits, as were both cast out of Men at Jesus's Command, and could not enter into the Swine without his Permission.

Nay, even in this Case too, supposing *Jesus* to have been a *Prophet*, and, in Consequence hereof, to have acted by *Commission* from God, he could not be guilty of any Injustice in this Action; because, upon this Supposition, the Act will come to be consider'd, not as
p
his

his Act, but as an Act of Providence. If Jesus had no Right to destroy the People's Swine, yet God, who is the supreme Proprietor of the whole Earth, most certainly had: and shall we then complain of him for such a Punishment as this, when every Day we see more surprizing Instances before our Eyes? When we see him laying whole Nations waste with Pestilence, with Famine, and with Earthquakes, shall we confess his Sovereign Authority in these Cases; and yet, upon the Loss of *two Thousand Swine*, cry out, and say, *Why hast thou done thus?* The Heathens themselves (upon the Supposition of a Providence) will acknowledge this to be unreasonable; nor can our Saviour (as acting by a Divine Commission) ever be justly blam'd, because he once or twice did the same thing, which God does every Day.

The Truth is, whether the Proprietors were *Jews* or *Gentiles*,^a the Words in the Text do not imply, that our Saviour was either *Principal*, or *Accessory* in the Destruction of the Swine. St. Mark indeed tells us that he *gave the Devils leave*, and St. Luke, that he *suffer'd them* to enter into the Swine; but by this is meant no more, than that he did

^a Dr. Pearce, Part 2. p. 28.

did not prevent them; that he did not interpose his Divine Power in order to hinder them from entering: But if this made our Saviour a sharer in the Destruction of the Swine, by a parity of Reason, it will make God (because he permits it) answerable for all the Evil, that's done under the Sun; which were most Impious to think, and most Blasphemous to say.

Since therefore there were at *Gadara* *Swine* kept, by the Heathens no doubt, and not improbably by the *Jews* likewise; whether we suppose the *Jews* or *Heathens* Owners of this Herd, our Saviour's permitting the Devils to enter into them, made him not accessory to their Destruction; or if it be said that he did it with a *punitive* Intent, it was to make the *Jews* suffer for the Breach of their Law, or the Heathens for their obstinate Idolatry, which his Character of a *Prophet*, and the Testimony of his being *the Son of the most High*, without all Controversy, authorised him to do. And now to consider the Merits of the Miracle itself.

The Sum
of the
Answer.

Whether the Practice of *exorcising* Devils was really in use among the *Jews* before our Saviour's Time, is a Matter of some Debate among the Learned. Our Saviour indeed, in answer to the Objection of a *Diabolical* Confederacy in

Few or
no Exor-
cisms a-
mong the
Jew.

what he did, puts a Question to the *Jews*; *If I by Beelzebub cast out Devils, by whom do your Children cast them out?*

^b But by *the Children of the Jews*, some Interpreters will only understand those Sons of theirs, who were become our Saviour's Disciples, and more particularly the *Seventy*, to whom he had given a Commission *to cast out Devils*, and from whom, all such, as were diffident of the Matter, might receive full Conviction, is they pleas'd to enquire: tho' other Expositors think proper to refer the Words to the *Jews* at large, who, on some certain Occasions (as they suppose) were enable to dispossess Devils, by a solemn and religious Invocation of the God of *Abraham*, the God of *Isaac*, and the God of *Jacob*. However this be, that the Dispossession of Devils was no customary Thing among the *Jews*, before our Saviour's Ministry, is very evident from the great Surprise and Amazement they express'd, whenever they beheld such an Instance of his Power. For when, on any such Occasion, ^c *the Multitudes marvelled, saying, it was never so seen in Israel*; ^d *the People were amaz'd, and said, is not this the Son of David?* The Spectators began to question

^b Bp. Smallbrooke's Vinl. p. 191. : *Matth* ix. 33.
^c Ibid. xii. 13.

sion among themselves, saying, what Thing is this? What new Doctrine is this? For with Authority commandeth he even the unclean Spirits, and they obey him; this is a plain Argument, that the Authority, which our Saviour then exercis'd over the Powers of Darkness, was a Thing unknown in Judea, and a distinguishing Character of his being the Messiah, the Son of David.

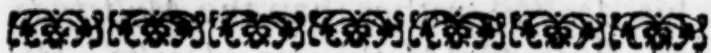
But we will allow for once, that, in If any, some rare Instances, the Jews, before they were Christ, were known to exorcise Devils; a Confirmation of yet it will not therefore follow, that our Christ. Saviour's dispossessions of them were no Proofs of his Divine Authority: So far from this, that the Jewish Exorcisms were rather a Confirmation of it. For, if such Dispossessions were really made among the Jews, by the Invocation of the Name of the God of Israel, our blessed Saviour, who not only did this with greater Efficacy, and in many more Instances, than was ever known before; but communicated to his Followers likewise an Ability to do the same in his own Name, must thereby declare to the World, that his Power was derived from the same Original; or, (more properly speaking,) since his Name had the same efficacy with his Father's, that he and his Father were one. And herein lies the

Strength of his Reasoning with the *Jews*,
*“ If I by Beelzebub cast out Devils, by
 whom do your Children cast them out ?*

*“ Your Children, you say, exorcise De-
 “ vils, by Virtue of the Name of the true
 “ God, and thereupon you conclude,
 “ that they are in no Confederacy with
 “ Satan ; you see me daily do the same,
 “ nay, do it in a greater Degree than
 “ they can ; and yet ye will not have
 “ the same good Opinion of me : Let
 “ them therefore be your Judges, and if
 “ they are conscious to themselves that,
 “ in doing of this, they have no Crimi-
 “ nal Correspondence, they certainly
 “ will acquit me, and own that, if I by
 “ the Spirit of God not only cast out
 “ Devils my self, but commission others
 “ to do the like in my Name, then
 “ doubtless the Kingdom of God is come
 “ unto you. ”* Whether therefore we
 suppose that the *Jews* did, or did not ex-
 orcise Devils, before the coming of our
 Saviour Christ, his divine Authority, in
 exerting that miraculous Power, is e-
 qually the same, or rather receives a
 greater Sanction and Confirmation from
 what they did : and so to proceed to
his Transfiguration on the Mount.

• Matth. xii. 27, 28.

SECT.



S E C T. XII.

Of his TRANSFIGURATION
on the Mount.

“ BUT, what do you mean by *The Ob-*
 “ *his Transfiguration*; says the *An-* *jection.*
 “ *ti-scripturist* presently; the Word, in
 “ its *Original*, signifies nothing less, than
 “ the *Change* or *Transformation* of a Per-
 “ son into the *Forms, Shapes, and Essences*
 “ of other Things and Creatures, of a
 “ different Species, Size, and Figure,
 “ But, not to insist too rigidly on
 “ Words, we will suppose that the
 “ *Change of his Raiment*, and the *Bright-*
 “ *ness of his Countenance*, was all that
 “ is intended by the *Transfiguration*;
 “ yet, still we may be allowed to ask,
 “ for what End and Purpose did *Jesus*
 “ exhibit this? As he was the *Wisdom*,
 “ as well as the *Power of God*, all his
 “ Actions, (one would think) should
 “ have been guided by Reason and
 “ Discretion at least: but, where is the
 “ Sense of his appearing, at this time,
 “ in more Lustre than ordinarily? Where
 “ the Sense of his making a *Mountain*,

“ rather than a *Valley*, the *Scene*; and
 “ his *Apostles*, rather than the *Multitude*,
 “ the *Witnesses*, of this his *Majesty*. His
 “ *Apostles*, we know, were attached to
 “ his Party, and, to *aggrandize* their
 “ Master’s Glory, might relate many
 “ wonderful Things of him; but, among
 “ the *Multitude* there were doubtless
 “ many *Unbelievers*, and for their Con-
 “ viction it would have been proper,
 “ that themselves should have had the
 “ Sight of this Miracle, rather than been
 “ obliged to take the Report of it only
 “ from such, as might justly be *suspect-*
 “ *ed of Partiality*, or (in the Fright and
 “ Consternation that seized them) might
 “ possibly *mistake* one thing for another.
 “ Nor is it less strange and unaccounta-
 “ ble, that the true *Moses* and *Elias* (not
 “ any Spectres or Apparitions in their
 “ Likeness) should be present with *Je-*
 “ *sus* on the Mount, and the Apostles
 “ over-hear them Discourse together,
 “ and yet make no Report of it; nor
 “ transmit one Word to Posterity, of
 “ what these three greatest Prophets
 “ and Philosophers of the Universe might
 “ then *confabulate*, for our Instruction
 “ and Edification.

The End
 of Christ’s
 Transfi-
 guration.

To know the true End and Design
 of our Saviour’s *Transfiguration*, it may
 not

not be improper to look back a little into the *Context*, where we find, that, after *Peter's* confessing him to be ^c *the Christ, the Son of the living God*, from that time began he to shew unto his Disciples, how that he must go unto *Jerusalem*, and suffer many Things of the Elders, and chief Priests, and Scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third Day. Nor was this all, for he foretold them, that they likewise were to suffer many grievous Persecutions for his Name's Sake; and therefore he recommended to them the unpleasant Doctrines of ^d *Self-denial*, and taking up the Cross, and following him, with this great (though distant) Encouragement, that ^e *when the Son of Man should come in the Glory of his Father, with his Angels, he should then reward every one according to his Works.*

These Predictions, Doctrines, and Promises, were so contrary to the Expectations of his Disciples, who hoped, in him, to have a *temporal* Prince and Deliverer, a Restorer of the decay'd State of *Israel*, and Promoter of themselves to great Honours and Employments; that our Saviour thought proper, (not many Days after) in order to revive their Faith and Trust in him, and ^f to fortify their Minds

^c Matth. xvi. 21, &c. ^d Ver. 24. ^e Ver. 27.
^f Young's Sermon. vol. 1. p. 360.

Minds against what was likely to ensue, to take as many with him into the Mount, as made up a *legal Evidence*, and there to give them an *ocular Conviction* of what he had promised, in recompence of what they were to suffer, by assuming, for a while, the Lustre * and Appearance of a glorified Body; which so raised their drooping Hearts, that we find St. Peter immediately declaring, & Lord, *it is good for us to be here, and, if thou wilt, let us make here three Tabernacles, one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.* For the Design of these Words is, not only to secure his Master, by staying in that Retreat, from the Sufferings and Death, which would be the Consequence of his going up to Jerusalem, (as St. Chrysostom and others understand it) but to express likewise

* This is the proper Meaning of the Word μεταμορφῶθαι. For μορφή, both in the Old and New Testament, does not signify the *Essence*, or constituent Properties of a Man, but only his *external Shape* or *Appearance*: As when it is said of Belshazzar [Dan. v. vi. 10.] and of Daniel [c. vii, v. 28.] that ἡ μορφή ἠλλιώθη *their Forms were changed*; of Nebuchadnezzar, that ἡ μορφή μου ἐπέστρεψεν ἐπ' ἐμὲ *my Form returned to me* [Dan. iv. 36.] and of Christ, that he appeared to two of his Disciples, ἐν ἑτέρᾳ μορφῇ *in another Form* [Mark xvi. 12.] for which Reason, the Word, which is derived from it, can extend no farther, than to a Change of the outward Form or Appearance only. Waitby on Phil. ii. 6.

† Luke ix. 4.

likewise the Pleasure and Satisfaction he took in this *Transfiguration*, and glorified Company; and how he resum'd fresh Spirits and Comfort, from a Miracle, which was *Emblematical* of the Glorious State, not of Christ only, but of all good Christians, after their Resurrection.

The only Instance we have in Scripture of any *Transfiguration* like unto this, is in the Case of *Moses*,^h after he had been forty Days and forty Nights with God on Mount Sinai; for, upon his Descent, we are told, *that the Skin of his Face so shone, that the Children of Israel were afraid to come nigh him, and therefore he put a Veil on his Face, while he talked with them.* That our blessed Lord, in the act of his *Transfiguration*, might probably have respect to this preceding one of *Moses*, and, both in the Nature of the Change, and the Place where 'twas wrought, design some Conformity thereunto, is what we are at Liberty to suppose; and consequently can account, why the Scene of this Transaction was in a Mountain, rather than a Valley: and why the three Apostles, *Peter, James, and John*, and not the whole *Multitude*, were allow'd to be Spectators of it, we have several Reasons to alledge. For,

Why on a Mountain.

^h Exod. xxxiv. 28, &c.

Why the
three Apo-
stles, and
not the
Multitude
admitted
to it.

For, besides that this was a vouch-
safement, fit only to be communicated
to such, as were of his more immediate
Confidence, and stood in the highest De-
gree of his Esteem; to such, as, for
their Zeal and Affection to him, were
honour'd and distinguish'd * with a pe-
culiar Title, and, after his Resurrection,
appointed by Providence to be the great
Pillars of his Church; and besides, that
it would have look'd like Vanity and
Ostentation in him, to have taken the
Multitude into the Mount, and there
made a publick Sight of his Miracles,
which was the Thing he always care-
fully declin'd: Besides this, I say, there
seems to be something in the *Transfigu-
ration* itself, which might have been of
dangerous Consequence for the Multi-
tude to have been admitted to.

The Na-
ture of it.

St. Peter, who himself was one of
those, who were with him on the *holy
Mount*, gives us this account of it. *We
have not follow'd cunningly devised Fables,*
says he, *when we made known unto you
the Power and Coming of our Lord Jesus
Christ, but were Eye-witnesses of his Ma-
jesty; for he received from God the Fa-
ther Honour, and Glory, when there came
such a Voice to him from the excellent
Glory, this is my beloved Son, in whom I*

* Vid. Matth. vii. 17. 2. Pet. i. 16, &c.

am well pleased. Now, by his Majesty, in this Place, most properly is to be understood that Lustre and Radiency, wherein he appeared, when his Face *shone as the Sun, and his Garments* (pierced through with the Beams, that were darted from his Body) *became as white as Light*: ^k For to *shine as the Sun*, is a Phrase expressing something ^l belonging to celestial Majesty; and *white* and *splendid* Garments, are proper for Kings, and ^m Royal Ministers of the Heavenly Court. And, in like manner, by the *excellent Glory*, from whence the Voice proceeded, can be meant nothing, but the bright and shining Cloud, that then appear'd, which the *Jews* call the *Shechinah*, and is made up (as most imagine) of an *Host of Angels*, the constant *Symbol* of the Divine Presence; and how great and magnificent this Symbol is, we may, in some measure, learn from the Vision of the Prophet *Daniel*: ⁿ *The Ancient of Days did sit, whose Garment was white as Snow, and the Hair of his Head like the pure Wooll: his Throne was like the fiery Flame, and his Wheels as burning Fire: a fiery Stream did issue from before him; Thousands of Thousands ministred unto him, and ten Thousand*

^k Vid. *Whitby*, 2 *Pet.* i. 6. ^l *Matth.* xiii. 43.
^m *Rev.* iii. 4. ⁿ *Dan.* vii. 9, 10.

Thousand times ten Thousands stood before him.

Supposing then that this was the manner of our Saviour's *Transfiguration*; that not only, in his own Person, he was array'd with all this Glory and Lustre, but had likewise an Angelick Host surrounding him, two of the greatest Prophets of ancient Ages attending him, and a Voice from Heaven declaring him to be *the well-beloved Son of God*, while the Multitude stood by, and saw and heard all this; it would have been almost unavoidable, but that, upon such Conviction of his being the *Messiah*, ° *they would have taken him by Force and made him a King*. But since (as our Saviour tells us) his ^p *Kingdom was not of this World*, nor to come with the Pomp and Observation, which the *Jews* expected; and since one of his great Concerns was, that no disturbance of the Civil Government should be occasion'd by him, or laid to his charge; he wisely made choice of three only, (but these the *principal* of his Apostles) to whom he exhibited a *Specimen* of his future Glory: And, as he came down from the Mount, he charged them *that they should tell the Vision to no Man, till after his Resurrection*;

Why
Christ
charg'd
his Apo-
stles to
conceal
it.

° John vi. 15. ^p Matth. xvii. 9.

rection; ⁹ because, *before* that most illustrious Instance of his Power, this *Glorification* of him (which was not very suitable to his mean outward Circumstances) would scarce have been credited by the *Jews*: but, after his Resurrection, and when he was actually to enter into that glorious State, of which this Transfiguration was *Emblematical*; the Testimonies of three competent Witnesses would be receiv'd with greater conviction: especially considering, (what makes their Testimony of more avail, than that of ten Thousand others) ¹ that they could prove the Truth of what they testified, and convince Mankind, that there was no Fraud or Imposture, by any suppos'd Management of a Cloud in any assignable Situation of it, *by the Gifts of the Holy Ghost*, which they having receiv'd from him, after his Resurrection, both exercised themselves and imparted to Believers.

We cannot but imagine, indeed, that so splendid and so awful an Appearance must needs have affected the Apostles with Wonder and Amazement; and ¹ the *Evangelists* tells us, that they fell into an Ecstasy, ² as being unable,

The Apostles not mistaken in it.

¹ Bp. Smallbrooke's Vind. Ch. 4. ² *Misael. Sacra*, Vol. 62. p. 77. ³ *Matth.* xvii. 6, 7. ⁴ *Young's Sermon*. Vol. 2. p. 360.

at present, to sustain the Sight of that *Majesty* and *Glory*, which they themselves, in due time, were to put on: but, as we may observe, from our Saviour's injoining them Silence, that, in their Return from the Mount, their Conversation turn'd upon the Subject; we cannot but suppose, that their *Curiosity* would naturally lead them to ask many Questions concerning the Circumstances of this wonderful Transaction, which our Saviour, out of his great Goodness and Humanity, would not fail to resolve: so that whatever Defect might be occasioned by their Astonishment or Consternation at the Sight, might amply be supplied by their Master's kind *Information* of what had passed.

That *Moses* and *Elias* were personally there.

Their Master (as we said) in his coming down from the Mountain, charged them that they should tell no *Man* what they had seen; and from the Word *ὄραμα*, which we render *Vision*, some have supposed, that *Moses* and *Elias* were not there in their proper Persons, but that the Apostles, in their Fancy and Imagination, had only a strong Idea, or Impression of them, or at most, that their *Spectres*, or some shadowy Resemblances of them only were there. Since the *Evangelist's*, however, speak of

of them in a personal Character and Capacity ; since they represent them, as *talking with Christ, and speaking of his Decease, which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem* ; since, they tell us, that, when they were come out of the Ecstasy, into which this Vision had cast them, they saw *two Men standing with him* ; it is much more probable to think, that *Moses and Elias* were really there, and that God had, some where or other, from the time of their Departure out of this World, preserved both their Bodies to this End. The Scriptures, indeed, are express as to *Elias*, that he was translated *into Heaven*, by the Ministry of Angels, resembling *"a Chariot of Fire, and Horses of Fire* ; and it is a pretty general Opinion, *"* both among *Jewish and Christian* Authors, taken (as is supposed) from some *apocryphal* Book, that *Moses* did not die, but was translated into Heaven, or some terrestrial Paradise, in the same Manner as were *Enoch and Elias*. There is a Passage in *St. Jude*, where ** Michael the Archangel* is said *to contend with the Devil, and dispute about the Body of Moses*, which (if taken in a *literal* Sense) will greatly

Q favour

" 2 *Kings* ii. 11. *"* Vid. Dissert. de Calmet sur la Mort il la Sepulture de Moyse, vol. 3. ** Jud.* v. 9.

favour this Opinion : For, if we can but suppose, ^y that, the Contest between this *good* and *evil* Angel, concerning *Moses's* Body, related not to its *Burial* (as some will have it) but its *Assumption* into Heaven, or some other Place of Happiness, which the Devil might oppose, and urge the Obligation of his dying the common Death of all Men, for this Reason more especially, because he had once taken away the Life of an *Egyptian* : If we can but suppose, I say, that the Contest arose upon this Subject, then may we easily conceive, both how *Moses* might subsist in a separate State, from the Time of his *Assumption*, and how he, together with *Elias*, might be dispatched from thence, upon this Occasion, to set off the Lustre of our Lord's *Transfiguration*, by their appearing, at the same time, in their resplendent Robes of Glory.

And what
Subjects
they dis-
coursed
on.

And, indeed, if this was the purpose of their *Errand*, what Subject can we suppose so proper, and so well becoming the Conversation of three such illustrious Persons, as the *Redemption* of Mankind by the Death and Passion of the *Son of God*. What these two ancient Prophets had in their Times, imperfectly revealed ; nay, what the *Angels* of Heaven
desire

^y Vid. *Whitby* in Locum.

*desire at all times to look into, viz. the Harmony of the divine Attributes, in this stupendous Work, ^z the depth of the Riches, both of the Wisdom and Knowledge of God, and ^a the breadth and length, and depth, and height of the Love of Christ, which passeth Knowledge; My-
 steries, which have been hid from Ages, and from Generations, but are now made manifest to the Saints: these were the sublime Subjects (for all these are implied in ^b their speaking of Christ's De-
 cease) of their Conversation at this Inter-
 view; and, in Comparison of these, how jejune and worthless are all the wise Sayings of Philosophers, or Composi-
 tions of humane Wit? With good Reason, therefore might the great Apostle of the Gentiles, (who himself was no mean Proficient in what the World falsely calls Knowledge,) instead of the ^c Excel-
 lency of Speech and Wisdom, determine to know nothing among his Corinthians but Jesus Christ and him crucified: for ^d we preach Christ crucified, says he, unto the Jews a Stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks Foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the Power of God, and the Wisdom of God; for ^e of God he is made unto us
 Q 2 Wisdom,*

Rom. xi. 33. ^a Eph. iii. 18, 19. ^b Luke ix. 31.
 Cor. ii. 1, 2. ^d 1 Cor. i. 23. ^e Ver. 30.

Wisdom, and Righteousness, and Sanctification; and Redemption;

The Sum
of the
whole
Answer.

And now, looking back upon what has been said, *viz.* that the proper Use and Design of our Saviour's *Transfiguration* was, to *fortify* his Apostles against what would shortly come upon both their Master, and themselves; that, as to the place, where the *Transfiguration* was wrought, some *Analogy* might be had to what befel *Moses* on *Mount Sinai*, but no Umbrage cou'd be given for any Suspicion of the least Fraud or Imposture; that the Testimony of *three* competent Witnesses were sufficient for the purpose, and some Disturbance might possibly have accrued to the State, if the whole Multitude had been admitted to the Sight of it; and lastly, that, at this *Transfiguration*, there is great Reason to presume, that *Moses* and *Elias* were both present in their proper Persons, and discoursed with Christ on the great Argument of Man's Redemption, by his Meritorious Death and Passion; we have answer'd, I think, the Challenge that was made us, and given proper and satisfactory Solutions to the several Difficulties and hard Questions, concerning the Miracle of our Saviour's *Transfiguration*; and are therefore at Liberty now to proceed to *that of his healing the Woman of her Issue of Blood.*

SECT.



S E C T. XIII.

Of his HEALING *the* Woman of
her Issue of Blood.

“ **B**UT had his Power of healing ^{The Ob-}
 “ Diseases, been ever design’d as ^{jection.}
 “ an Argument of his *Divine Authority*,
 “ the Diseases, which he cur’d, and
 “ the manner of his Operation there-
 “ in, would have been so *accurately*
 “ described by the *Evangelists*, (which
 “ we find they have not done) as
 “ that we might have been sure that
 “ the Work was *Supernatural*; where-
 “ as, in the Case now before us,
 “ they have left us Ignorant, both as to
 “ the *Nature* and *Degree* of this Wo-
 “ man’s Distemper. If however we
 “ may be allow’d to conjecture by what
 “ these imperfect Historians have told
 “ us, *viz.* That the Woman subsisted
 “ under her Malady for the space of
 “ *twelve Years*, and was of *Strength*
 “ sufficient to bear the *Press* of the Peo-
 “ ple, when she applied to Jesus for
 “ Cure; ’tis highly probable, that her
 “ Distemper was but some slight Indis-
 “ position,

“ position, a little Bleeding at the Nose
 “ now and then, (for the Word ἀίμαρ-
 “ ροῦσα may signify *that*, as well as any
 “ thing else) or some such small Eva-
 “ cuation, as might have been a means,
 “ (had she not been more *nice* than
 “ *wise*) to *prolong*, rather than *shorten*
 “ her Life. The Woman however, ha-
 “ ving, upon some account or other, en-
 “ tertain’d a good Conceit of *Jesus*, (as
 “ Conceit in these Cases is all in all,)
 “ and *Jesus*, upon some hint or other,
 “ taking occasion to encourage that
 “ Conceit, her Cure is imputed to the
 “ *Touch of the hem of his Garment*, when
 “ it was *in reality* the pure effect of a
 “ strong *Imagination*.

The man-
 ner of the
Evange-
lists rela-
 ting
 Christ’s
 Cures.

It is the peculiar Excellency of the
Gospel-History, that as it was intended
 for the Use and Instruction of all, so is
 it adapted, in the Plainness and Simplici-
 ty of its Composition, to every one’s Ca-
 pacity. The *Evangelists* pretend to do
 no more, then to give us an easy and
 familiar Account of our Saviour’s Life
 and Transactions; and ’twould be put-
 ting them out of *Character*, when their
 Province is to write as *Historians*,[†] to
 expect that they should describe, with
 the Accuracy of profess’d *Physicians* and
Chirurgeons,

[†] Bp. Smallbroke’s Vind. p. 272.

Chirurgeons, the Nature and Symptoms of the several Diseases, which Jesus cur'd, and they, as the Writers of his *Memoirs*, were oblig'd to record. What seems to be requir'd of them, in this Case, is, that they should so far relate the Circumstances of each Disease, as to make them sufficient to convince all rational and unprejudic'd Persons, that the Power, whereby the Cures were effected, was certainly Supernatural. But, because this is one of the first *bodily* Cures, that falls under our Consideration, let us enquire a little, whether, in the general, there be any just Reason (as is suggested) to suspect their *Fidelity* in relating them.

The *Evangelists* indeed had no Skill in Diseases, & nor is it at all necessary to the support of the Credit of their Relations that they should have had any : But Eyes and Understanding they certainly had, in virtue of which they were Judges, (as all other Men are,) of the common Appearances of Distempers, such as *Blindness*, *Lameness*, *Crookedness*, and the like. If therefore they falsified in their Account of these Matters, it must be out of a Confederacy with their Master, and such a *Confederacy*, as was levell'd against the whole

Their *Fidelity* herein.

Q 4

Jewish

Jewish Nation, and threaten'd nothing less, than the subversion of their Religion, and the utter Abolition of the Law of *Moses*, to which they were addicted even to *Superstition*. But now what Method do they take to carry on this Cheat? Why, in the very Country, where the whole Scheme of the Transaction was to lie, they extol Jesus as a Prophet; as one, who prov'd his *Divine Mission* by such Miraculous Cures, as were never heard of before: and in their Account of this, not only specify the Diseases, and the manner of their Cure, but the very Places (with other particular Circumstances) where the Persons liv'd, upon whom these Cures were wrought. At *Jerusalem* for Instance, they tell us, that, on the Feast of the *Passover*, he cur'd a Man, who had been lame *eight and thirty Years*, by bidding him arise and walk; that, in *Galilee*, in one of their Synagogues, on the Sabbath Day, he restor'd a Man that had a wither'd Hand, by bidding him *stretch it forth*; and that, at *Capernaum*, he healed a *Centurion's* Servant, who was sick of the Palsy, only by speaking a Word. These, and many more Instances of the like nature, are reported of Jesus; in consequence of which, he, and his *Disciples*, gain'd Credit every Day among the People, who came over in

in great Numbers to their Party. But now, supposing any Man, at this time of day, should pretend a Commission from God, to set up a new Religion in opposition to *Christianity*, and, to countenance his Pretensions, should have his Followers give out, that, at *London*, he cur'd an *Alderman's* Son of Fits; at *St. Alban's*, a Gentleman's Servant of a broken Leg; at *Dover*, restor'd a blind Man to his Sight, and so on; is it possible that ever such a Pretender as this should gain Credit? Would not every one think himself concern'd to make strict Enquiry, whether these Things were so, or not? Would not the People, in every Place, to whom Appeal was made, testify that no such Things were ever seen or heard among them? And, in consequence of this, would not the *Impostor*, instead of gaining *Profelytes*, be expos'd, and grow contemptible in the Eyes of the People? But since the very reverse of this happen'd to our blessed Lord, and his Pretensions, it is an Argument, next to a Demonstration, that there was no Cheat in the Cures which he wrought, nor any Falsification in the *Evangelists* manner of relating them: And so we turn to the Cure, which, at present, lies before our View.

Now

The State
of the
Woman's
Case.

Now the *Evangelist* tells us, that, while our Saviour, attended with a great number of People, was going along with a certain ^b *Ruler of the Synagogue*, in order to cure his Daughter, just then at the point of Death; this Woman, who had been diseased (as the generality of Physicians think it) with an *Hysterical Flux*, or *Issue of Blood*, and had suffered many Things of the Physicians, insomuch that she had spent all that she had, and was nothing better'd, but rather grew worse; being fully persuaded, that, if she could but come at Christ, the very Touch of his Garment would heal her, made a shift to get behind him in the Crowd, and immediately, upon Experiment, found within herself that she was cured. But, the Cure being done secretly, and without the Privy of any of the Company, our Saviour turns about, and enquiring who had touched him, the poor Woman, fearing, and trembling, and knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before him, and told him all the Truth, or (as ⁱ St. Luke has it) declared unto him, before all the People, for what Cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately.

Her Dis-
temper
Chronical.

In this Light the *Evangelical* History has placed the Woman's Distemper, and

^b *Matth. ix. Mark v. Luke viii.* ⁱ *Luke viii. 47.*

and her Cure; and from hence it is no hard Matter to discern, that her Distemper was no flight or sudden Indisposition, but one of so obstinate and inveterate a Nature, as not to be cur'd by the Art of Physick. For her *suffering many Things of many Physicians* shews, that she had undergone some harsh and uncommon Courses of it, and that too at so great an Expence, that whatever her Circumstances were (and they seem to be considerable by her consulting so many Physicians) she was reduc'd by them to Poverty.

Her Condition indeed is not represented so weak, but that she could get into the Crowd, and make forward to come at Christ; but the Crowd, we read of here, could not possibly be so great, as what we meet with in other places. In other places ^k we find our Saviour frequently represented, as surrounded with large Multitudes of People, whose Attention was strongly engag'd in hearing his excellent Discourses, and in seeing his amazing Works. In this Case indeed there was no breaking through the Crowd, nor could any *new Comer* gain Admittance to him, especially ^l when he was in an House. But here
we

Why she
might
come at
Christ

^k Ray's Vind. part 2. p. 36.
2, 4. & Luke viii. 19, 20.

^l Vid. Mark ii.

we find him walking along in an open place, accompanied with a Magistrate, whose Presence might restrain any Tumult, and neither Preaching to the People, nor working any Miracle, until this Woman came, which made her Access much more easy. But be the Difficulty suppos'd never so great, yet who would not struggle upon such an Occasion as this, when *Skin for Skin, and all that a Man has, will he give for his Life*; when her Condition was become so desperate, that, without this last Experiment, she was lost and undone? For such was the Nature of her Distemper, (says ^m a very great Physician, having her very Case before him) that *it gains Strength in Progress: It encreases and grows worse by Remedies, and, at last, all Benefit of them is despaired of, inso-much that Æsculapius himself, could not have cured a Patient in these Circumstances.*

That she
was not
cur'd by
Imagina-
tion.

How vain and groundless a Notion is it then, to suppose, that a Disease of this Kind and Continuance, could ever be cured by the Strength of the Woman's *Imagination*? Whether ever Cures of Chronical Diseases were brought about by the help of a strong ⁿ *Fancy*, is much

^m *Adver. de morbis Evang. apud critic Sacra. Tom. 9. p. 3685.* ⁿ *Dr. Pearce's Vind. part 4. p. 24.*

much to be questioned; but admitting there were some Instances of this kind, yet there is one Circumstance, which plainly distinguishes them from the miraculous Cures of Christ, *viz.* that they were never affected *at once*, and in a *moment*, but when a Surprize of Joy, and a strong Persuasion that he should be cured, had so far work'd upon the *Patient*, as to give a new Turn and Motion to his Spirits and Juices of his Body, he has only begun, from that Time, to find an Amendment; and the Impression of the same Passions remaining strong upon him afterwards, he has recovered by degrees, and in length of Time, the Cure has been compleated, and *Nature* help'd to finish, what the *Imaginatio* had imperfectly begun. The Truth is, all the Work of *Fancy*, in this Case, is, to entertain a very good Opinion of a Physician, of his Skill, and Fidelity, and possibly of his Friendship; and thence to be pleased with great Hopes of the Success of his Prescriptions. But it is utterly incredible, that the very best Opinion, or most *Sanguine* Hopes could be powerful enough to remove a *Chronical* Distemper, so habitually rooted in Nature *for twelve Years* together, as to have in vain exhausted the whole

Art

Art of *Physick*, and baffled the Attempts of all *Physicians*. If ever the Power of Fancy could have availed any thing towards the curing of an inveterate Distemper, this Woman, one would think, must have received great Benefit from some one or other of those many Physicians, she had consulted; since it is not reasonable to think, she would have *spent all her Living upon them*, nor gone through so many severe Courses, as were prescribed by them, had she not conceived a very good Opinion, at least, of some of them, and hoped, by their Advice, to recover her Health; and yet we find she *rather grew worse*, until she came to *Jesus*, in *full Assurance of Faith*, and, by the Emanation of a divine Power from him, received *the Consummation of her Hope*.

But by
Christ's
Power and
her Faith
in him.

What this *sanative* Virtue was, which resided in the Body of the holy *Jesus*; how it was exerted, and when exerted, how he preceived it, and was affected by it, are Points that we cannot resolve, because the Spirit of God has not thought proper to reveal them. This, however, every common Reader may observe, that there was a certain previous Qualification, in some measure, required in those sick Persons, whom Christ vouchsafed to Cure, and without which he did

did not (^p not because he could not, but because he would not) usually extend his divine Power ; and that Qualification was *Faith*, or believing him to be a true *Prophet*, and consequently the *Messiah*, that was to come into the World.

This Woman therefore, hearing of *Jesus*, as he was accidentally passing by, and encouraged by the former Miracles, he had wrought, which were undeniable Proofs of his Power and Compassion, adventured to make her humble Application to him. She, as well as the rest of the People, could not but stand amazed at the marvellous Works he did, and was constrained to acknowledge, that no Man could do the like, *except that God were with him* : and therefore, in Obedience to God, in whose Name he acted, and who so visibly owned and approved of his Pretensions, she gave a publick Testimony (by this outward touching of his Garment) of her singular Regard and Veneration for so *divine* a Person. As her Extremity was great, so it gave her a fit Opportunity to express her high Opinion of his Power to help, and gracious Inclination to commiserate, the distressed. Upon this Subject

* Compare *Matt.* xiii. 58. with *Mark* vi. 5, 6.

ject she declares herself with a Confidence and Satisfaction, free from the least Suspicion of a Disappointment, *If I may but touch his Garment, I shall be whole* : And the publick Applause, which our Saviour gave to this remarkable Instance of her Faith, seems to intimate, that he was particularly pleased with her Temper of Mind, as boasting something more than a mere impatience to be cured of her Disease, and proceeding indeed from a full Sense and Persuasion of his *divine Character and Commission* ; *Daughter, be of good Comfort, thy Faith has made thee whole, go in Peace.* And so we proceed to the other Woman, that was cured of *her Spirit of Infirmary*.

† Luke viii. 48.

S E C T.



S E C T. XIV.

Of his curing the Woman of her Spirit of Infirmary.

“ **B**UT this Cure, according to the The Ob-
 “ Letter, was no Miracle at all, jection:
 “ and in some Parts of the Story incredi-
 “ ble. The *Evangelist*, who himself
 “ was a *Physician*, and (if he had suffici-
 “ ent Knowledge in his Profession)
 “ would have doubtless told us the
 “ worst of the Case, says no more,
 “ than that the Woman *had a Spirit*
 “ *of Weakness*, i. e. was a poor-spi-
 “ rited and vapourish Creature, full
 “ of Fancies, (perhaps of the Devil’s
 “ Temptations and Power over her,)
 “ and this, resting upon her for the
 “ space of *eighteen Years*, might well
 “ sink, and bow down a Person of her
 “ disconsolate and dejected Temper:
 “ This is the whole of the Distemper:
 “ And the Cure of it could be nothing
 “ else, but Jesus’s coming to her, and
 “ giving her some comfortable Advice
 “ and Admonition; whereupon she, ha-
 “ ving an high Opinion of his Wisdom
 “ and Goodness, might recover, and be
 R “ after=

“ afterwards of a more chearful Heart
 “ and erect Countenance. So that (ta-
 “ king the Devil out of the Story) I see
 “ nothing wonderful, either in the Dis-
 “ ease, or Cure: And that *the Devil*
 “ ought to be *taken out of the Story*, is
 “ plain for this Reason, because, in the
 “ Writings of the *Evangelists*, we have
 “ such frequent Accounts of *Satan*,
 “ *Beelzebub*, and other unclean Spirits,
 “ in comparision to what we have in other
 “ preceding Histories, that, if these
 “ Things were *literally* to be understood,
 “ one would be tempted to think, that
 “ the Age, in which *Christ* came, was
 “ that, wherein *Hell first broke loose, and*
 “ *infested Mankind*. And yet 'tis certain,
 “ that these Stories have no other Mean-
 “ ing, than what is *Cabalistical*; nor
 “ does *Satan*, and all his Train of *De-*
 “ *vils*, signify any thing more, than the
 “ *wicked and outrageous Passions* of Man-
 “ kind.

The State
 of the
 Woman's
 Case.

St. Luke as a Physician, and no doubt
merely because he was one, (as * a late
 learned Master of that Science has well
 observ'd) *when there is occasion to speak*
of Distempers, or the Cure of them, makes
use of Words more simple, more correct;
as well as more Physical, than the other
 Evan-

* Dr. Freind's Hist. of Physick, p. 222, &c.

Evangelists; and'twas his reading Greek Authors, while he studied Physick, that made his Language in this respect better. Let us then see in what manner he describes the Distemper now before us. He tells us, ^t That while our Saviour was teaching in one of the Synagogues, on the Sabbath Day, he chanc'd to espy a Woman, who, for eighteen Years, had been so infirm, that her Body was contracted, and bound together, and that to such a degree, that she could in no wise lift up herself, i. e. could not so much as raise her Head, and look upwards. For, that this is the true Meaning of the Passage, appears most evidently from the Phrases *being bound*, and then *loosed*, which latter Word is literally interpreted by the equivalent Expression, of her ^v being made strait by Jesus.

Thus it appears, that the Woman's Condition was convuls'd, and convuls'd by a tension of the Muscles, which bend the Body forwards; and the immediate Cause of this her Malady, the *Evangelist* acquaints us, was a *Spirit of Infirmary*. By this *Spirit of Infirmary* we might indeed understand the *Disease itself*, agreeably to the *Jewish* way of speaking; but since afterwards, our Saviour himself plainly tells us, that this Evil was

Inflicted
by the
Devil.

R 2

inflicted

^t Luke xiii. 10. &c. ^v Ver. 13.

inflicted * by Satan, “ It is the better way, (says ^w a learned Annotator) to take this matter in the same Sense, wherein ^x St. Mark uses the Expressi- on, πνεῦμα ἄλαλον, a dumb Spirit, as meaning thereby an evil Spirit, that obstructed the Power of Speaking. For it was an ancient Opinion of the Jews, that many Diseases were occasion’d in Mankind by evil Spirits, without any regard to natural Causes; as it appears in the Case of Job, and Saul, as well as several Instances in the New Testament”. y So that, upon very competent Authority, we may pronounce, that this Woman’s Distemper was so far from being the mere Effect of Vapours and Melancholly, that it was a real and inveterate Disease of a very long standing, and occasion’d by the Influence of an Evil Spirit.

The Ex-
istence of
Devils be-
fore Christ.

That there are Spirits of this kind, the holy Scriptures have taken such care to acquaint us ^z with their Origin and Fall, their Names and ^a Numbers, their ^b Government and ^c Orders, their ^d malicious Designs, and Employments, &c. that no one can doubt of their Existence,

* Luke xiii. 16.

^w Grotius in Luc. 13.

^x Ch. ix. 17.

^y Bp. Smallbroke’s Vind. p. 321.

^z John viii. 44 & 2 Pet. ii. 4. ^a Matth. iv. 8.

^b Matth. xii. 26. ^c Eph. vi. 12. ^d 1 Pet. v. 6.

ence, who believes these holy Oracles to be true; nor can any endeavour to dispossess his Mind of this Persuasion, without tempting God to *give him up to a strong Delusion, that he may believe a Lye.* That, both among the *Jews* and *Gentiles*, before our Saviour's time, Men were possess'd with these evil Spirits, is manifest from the Testimony of *Josephus*, who tells us of a very powerful Form of *Exorcism*, which descended from *Solomon*, who learnt it from God; and from the Testimony of *Plutarch*, who acquaints us, that the *Magicians* of most Nations advised those, that were possess'd, to repeat the *Ephesian Letters*. That these evil Spirits were distinct *Subsistences*, and neither the *Passions* nor *Diseases* of Mankind, is plain, from the Circumstances of their Ejection; from their expostulating hereupon with Christ, *What have we to do with thee? art thou come to destroy us? art thou come to torment us before the Time?* And from his commanding them sometimes to be silent, and sometimes to come out of the Man, and enter into him no more, &c.

The Truth is, these apostate Spirits had gotten so far Possession of the World, that they began to rival God in his Worship; and therefore one End of his Son's

Why more
about his
Time.

R 3

Incar-

* Vid. *Whitby's* Gen. Pref. before the Epist. p. 43.

Incarnation is said to be this, ^f *That he might destroy the Works of the Devil, and overcome the strong one, and divide his Spoils.* And this, by the way, may suggest a Reason, why at, or about the Time of our Saviour's Advent, God might permit the Devil to exert himself in an usual manner, in order to be the more signally triumph'd over by the Saviour of the World, and those, that were delegated by him to convert Mankind to his Religion.

That
they are
not with-
out Pow-
er even
now.

'Tis true indeed, that the Devil has not acted, in so open and undisguis'd a manner, since the Establishment of *Christianity*, which has mightily impair'd his Power; but, tho' we do not know the Laws of the *invisibile World*, and under what Regulation evil Spirits may be now restrain'd, or *how*, and for what Reasons, they may have varied the outward Appearances of their former Conduct in their Transactions with Mankind, yet there is too much reason to apprehend, from the prodigious growth of all sorts of Vice and Impiety, that evil Spirits are, even now, more concern'd with the Spiritual Affairs of Men, than is generally imagin'd, tho' they may carry on their Commerce in a more art-ful

John iii. 8. ^f *Luke* xi. 21, 22.

ful and clandestine manner, than in former Times.

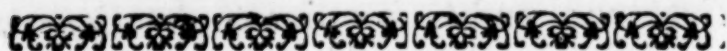
To return then to the Woman. If such was her unhappy Condition, that, for *eighteen Years*, she had been subjected to the Bondage of one of these evil Spirits, and reduc'd, at last, to such a degree of *Crookedness*, that she could by no means lift up her Head; how can we suppose, that a little good Advice and comfortable Discourse should dispossess the Fiend, and make her *strait*, and stand up right in a Moment? What is most remarkable in the Woman's Case is, that she does not seem to have expected any relief from Jesus. She happen'd accidentally to be in the Synagogue on the Sabbath-day, among other People; and he, seeing her, and observing her pitiable Condition, called her to him, and healed her. Now, had this Woman been only a little *Vapourish*, or Melancholly, without any visible bodily Distemper, it can hardly be imagin'd, that *Jesus*, in such a publick solemn Assembly, before so many Witnesses, and among these, not a few of his inveterate Enemies, would have pretended to cure a Woman, that had only some Illness, or slight Indisposition, which no Body cou'd perceive? So far from this, that, in the se-

The Woman's
Cure Miraculous.

quel of the Story, ^h we read, that the Woman *glorified God* for her happy Recovery; that the Ruler of the Synagogue express'd his Malice and Indignation at it; that our Saviour wisely justified the Action he had done; and that all the People *rejoic'd* and were *exceedingly glad* for what they had seen: ⁱ but, if the Woman's Disease was only *Vapours*, and a little lowness of Spirit, her Gratitude was too *prodigal*, because her Distemper was but a *trifle*, and all the Favour, she had receiv'd from Jesus, was only that of *a few fair Words*; the Ruler was outrageous for nothing, for no Cure had been done in breach of the *Sabbath-day*; and the People's Joy was only Noise and Nonsense, because they *had seen no glorious Thing perform'd*. But enough has been said in Confutation of this idle Dream; and therefore proceed we next to our Lord's *Prophetical Conversation with the Samaritan Woman*.

† *Luke xiii. 13, &c.* † *Ray's Vind. Part 2. p. 56.*

S E C T.



S E C T. XV.

*Of his Prophetical Conversation with
the Samaritan Woman.*

“ **B**UT instead of any thing *Prophe-* The Ob-
 “ *tical* in it, it is all mere *Fortune-* jection.
 “ *telling.* So far indeed as one can ga-
 “ ther from the Woman’s Discourse, the
 “ Expectation of the *Samaritans* was,
 “ that the *Messiah* should be neither a
 “ *Prince* nor a *Prophet*, but *Conjurer*
 “ only ; and for what appears in the
 “ Story (instead of any Tokens of
 “ *Omniscience* in it) the whole thing might
 “ be a Cheat and Artifice. By some
 “ private Intimations or other, (as the
 “ Practice of *Fortune-tellers* is,) Jesus
 “ might get Intelligence of some Cir-
 “ cumstances of this Woman’s Life ; and,
 “ by the help of these, first raise her
 “ Admiration, and then possess her with
 “ the Notion of his being the promis’d
 “ *Messiah*, which we find him more
 “ ready to declare to her, than ever he
 “ was to *wiser* People.

The

The Original of
the Samaritans.

The ^k *Samaritans* originally were the *Cutheans*, and such other of the *Eastern Nations*, as *Esurhaddud*, upon the Deportation of the *Israelites*, planted in *Samaria*; but after the Temple upon Mount *Gerezim* was built by *Sanballat*, and *Samaria* became a common Refuge and *Asylum* to all refractory *Jews*, this mixture of Inhabitants, in a short time, produc'd a Change in Religion. For, whereas these *Samaritans* had hitherto, worshipped the God of *Israel*, in conjunction with the Gods of the *East*, from whence they came, when once the *Jewish* Worship came to be settled, and the Book of the Law of *Moses* to be read publicly, they conformed themselves wholly to the Worship of the true God, and, in the Performance of it, were as exact, as the *Jews*, themselves: But herein they differ'd from the *Jews*, that they rejected all *Traditions*, and received no other Scriptures, but the five Books of *Moses*.

Their Expectation
of the
Messiah.

In these Books however they had the express Promise of *Moses* himself, that ¹ *God would raise up to them a Prophet, to whom they were to hearken*; and from the Prediction of *Jacob* might perceive, that,

* *Prideaux's Connection*, Part 1. L. 6.
Deut. xviii. 5.

that, now ^m *the Sceptre was departing from Judah, the Time of Shiloh's coming* was drawing near. From these Prophecies they might gather, that the *Messiah* was to come in the Character of a *King* and a *Prophet* both: and 'tis not to be doubted, but that the general Expectation of the *Jews* at this Juncture, their near Neighbourhood, and the Fame of many wonderful Works of *Jesus* done elsewhere, might awaken in the *Samaritans* some Attention.

It is no great Matter of Wit to give a *burlesque* Name to the most serious Thing in Nature; and because the Business of a Prophet extends to the Discovery of Things past, as well as the Prediction of what is to come, therefore to repute him a *Fortune-Teller*: ⁿ But, by the same kind of Treatment, may most of the great Prophets of old be *Nick-nam'd*. *Daniel*, for Instance, must be a *Fortune-Teller*, because he not only foretold future Things, but likewise made Discoveries of past Secrets, and, particularly, that of the Dream of *Nebuchadnezzar*; nay, *Moses* himself must not escape without being called a *Conjuror*, who (besides his many Prophecies

Prophets
ought
not to be
called
*Fortune-
tellers.*

^m Gen. xlix. 10.

ⁿ Bp. *Smallbrooke's Vind.* p. 371.

sies of future Events) revealed past Transactions, relating to the *Creation* it self, the first fall of Man, the Deluge, the Dispersion of Mankind, together with the Reasons and Ends of these, and many other Matters, that happen'd before his own Time. And must these great Prophets be rank'd among so vile a set of People, as *Conjurers* and *Sooth-sayers*? Or rather must *Prophecy* it self, which, in its greatest Latitude, comprehends the Discovery both of past and future Things, and, in both Respects, is derived from the same Divine *Original*, be exposed to Contempt under such a Character of Ridicule?

Our Saviour had no previous Knowledge of this Woman.

The *Samaritan* Woman, 'tis certain, had a different Opinion, both of our Saviour and his *Office*, when she found him breaking in upon her Secrets, and making a Discovery of Things, that were carefully concealed from the Eye of the World: for 'tis highly probable, that the infamous Course of her Life had not, as yet, been detected, since, upon our Saviour's reminding her of it, she seems so very much astonished. • *Come see a Man, that told me all Things, that ever I did*, is an Expression so full of Wonder and Amazement, of Confusion of Mind, and Conviction of Conscience,

science, as nothing, but an Eye, to which the most secret Recesses of the Heart lie naked and exposed, could have extorted. For we are to remember, that this was the first Interview that Christ ever had with this Woman; that his Conference with her was purely *accidental*, in his Journey out of *Judea* into *Galilee*; and that he was so far from having any previous Intelligence of her private Circumstances, that he was not so much as known to any of her Neighbours, and her Neighbours perhaps were as great Strangers, as any, to some Bosom-Secrets, that he had unfolded.

Cheats and *Impostors* do seldom make it their Business to reform the World; but our Saviour, in his Conversation with this Woman, endeavours to instruct her in the most sublime Truths; ^{His Discourse with her inconsistent with an Impostor.} in the spiritual Nature of God; the spiritual Worship, that is acceptable to him; the Imperfection, and speedy Abolishment both of the *Jewish* and *Samaritan* Worship; the Gift of the Spirit, as communicable by him, and the Consequence of imparting it, namely, everlasting Life. All these great and instructive Points (which but badly comport with the Character of an *Impostor*) were, in one occasional Discourse, taught this Woman;

man ; besides her Instruction, in order to Reformation, from the Discovery of the Secrets of her shameful Life. So that, what with the Excellence of his Doctrine, and a Consciousness of his Omniscience, not only she, but ^a *many Samaritans in the City* likewise were induced to *believe on him*, and to acknowledge him to be *indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the World*.

His declaring who he was upon all proper Occasions.

Our Saviour, 'tis true, was so far from making any unnecessary Declarations of himself, that, on some Occasions, we find him labouring to conceal his Divine Character, and, both ^r upon St. Peter's confessing him to be *the Christ*, and ^f after his Transfiguration, wherein he was declared to be *the Son of God*, charging his Disciples to say nothing of this, until his Resurrection : and the Reason hereof is plain, because ^r their Testimony in these Points might not only look like a Matter concerted between him and them, but because indeed they were not qualified to be his Witnesses of these Things, until they *had received Power from on high*, by the coming down of the *Holy Ghost*. 'Tis to be observed however, that, when ever our Lord is himself fairly called upon, and

^a *John* iv. 39, &c. ^r *Mark* viii. 30. ^f *Matt* vii. 9. ^r *Whitby* on *Matt*. ix. 30.

and especially by Persons invested with Authority, he never once conceals his Divine Nature and Commission. When the *Jews* ^v *came round him in Solomon's Porch, and said unto him, how long dost thou make us doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plain;* his Answer is express, *I told you, and ye believed not, the Works that I do in my Father's Name, they bear Witness of me, for I and my Father are one.* When he stood before the *Judgment-Seat*, and the High Priest demanded of him; ^w *I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us, whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God;* his answer is, *thou hast said*, or as St. Mark expresses it, ^x *I am;* and *ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the Right-hand of Power, and coming in the Clouds of Heaven.* Nay, there are some Instances, wherein, of his own accord, and without any demand of this kind, he freely discovers who he was: For, having cured the Man, that was born Blind, and afterwards meeting him accidentally, *dost thou believe on the Son of God?* says he; whereupon the Man asking, *Who is the Son of God, that I may believe on him?* Our Saviour replies, *Thou hast both seen him, and it is he, that talketh with thee.*
And

^v *John* x. 24, &c.

^w *Matt.* xxvi. 63, 64.

^x *Mark* xiv. 62.

Why he
discover-
ed him-
self to
this Wo-
man.

And therefore we need less wonder; that, when this *Samaritan* Woman had first of all confessed him to be a *Prophet*, and (as her Words seem to imply) was a little dubious, whether he was not the *Messiah*, our Saviour should prevent her Enquiry, and tell her *voluntarily*, that he was: especially considering, ^y that such a Declaration might be a Means to prepare her, and the rest of the *Samaritans*, whenever his *Apostles* should come and preach the Gospel unto them, to receive their Testimony. And so we proceed to *his Miracle upon the barren Fig-Tree*.



S E C T. XVI.

Of his cursing the FIG-TREE.

The Ob-
jection.

“ **B**UT, of all the Miracles of Jesus,
“ commend me, says the Unbeliever,
“ to *his cursing the Fig-Tree for not*
“ *bearing Fruit out of Season*; which, at
“ the first naming it, appears to be such
“ an *absurd* and *ridiculous*, if not
“ *malicious* and *ill-natur'd Act*, as can
“ hardly be equalled in any Instance
“ of

^y *Whitby in Locum.*

“ of the Life of a reputed wise Man.
 “ The *Evangelists* have represented the
 “ Matter in these Words. * *Jesus be-*
 “ *ing hungry, and seeing a Fig-Tree a-*
 “ *far off, having Leaves, he came, if*
 “ *haply he might find any thing thereon;*
 “ *and when he came to it, he found no-*
 “ *thing but Leaves, for the time of Figs*
 “ *was not yet. And he said unto it, let*
 “ *no Fruit grow on thee henceforward for*
 “ *ever, and presently the Fig-Tree wi-*
 “ *ther'd away.* Now how inconsistent
 “ is it with the Character of *Jesus*, a
 “ worker of Miracles, and who had
 “ Angels to minister to him when he
 “ pleased, that he should be driven to
 “ such an Extremity of Hunger, as to
 “ make him Passionate, and out of Hu-
 “ mour? How inconsistent with his
 “ Omniscience, that when he saw this
 “ Fig-Tree at a Distance, he should
 “ not know, that it had no Fruit on it,
 “ and so save himself the Trouble of
 “ going to it? But above all, how in-
 “ consistent with common Prudence, to
 “ expect Fruit at an unseasonable Time,
 “ and then resent an unavoidable Disap-
 “ pointment at so violent and outragi-
 “ ous a Rate? But, put the Case, that,
 “ coming up to the Fig-Tree he had
 “ haply found Fruit thereon; yet, still
 “ we

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* Matt. xxi. 19, &c. Mark xi. 13.

“ we may be allowed to ask, what le-
 “ gal Right he had to it, and how could
 “ he in Conscience, without asking leave
 “ of the *Proprietors*, have pulled and
 “ eaten it? And much more then may
 “ we ask, what Right and Authority
 “ he had to curse it, and where his
 “ Wisdom, or Justice, or Honesty lay, in
 “ destroying, by this Act of *Execration*,
 “ another Man’s harmless and inoffen-
 “ sive Tree? There is some Reason,
 “ however, to suppose, that this Act of
 “ *Execration* did not do the Work a-
 “ lone, but that, being minded to put
 “ a Trick upon his Disciples and Fol-
 “ lowers he might take an Opportuni-
 “ ty to slip from them, and give it such
 “ a private and imperceptible cut, as
 “ would make it wither away. But be
 “ that as it will, the Miracle is certain-
 “ ly repugnant to what our Divines
 “ would have us believe of Jesus, and
 “ the beneficent Nature of his Perform-
 “ ances. Instead of cursing this Tree,
 “ had he made a dead and withered
 “ one immediately bud, and flourish,
 “ and revive, this had been such an
 “ Instance of his Power, as must have
 “ pass’d for an indisputable Miracle;
 “ such an Instance, as (like his Mi-
 “ racles of healing Diseases) carried
 “ Goodness along with it; and from
 “ the

“ the one with the other, we might
 “ have justly inferr’d, that both were
 “ the Operations of a good God: but
 “ this one Instance of his cursing the
 “ Fig-Tree, in such a rash extrava-
 “ gant Manner, spoils the Credit, and
 “ sullies the Glory of all his other
 “ Works.

It cannot be denied indeed, but that ^{The State}
^a *our Lord Jesus Christ*, who, *tho’ he was* ^{and Con-}
rich (as the Apostle expresses it) by Na- ^{dition of}
 ture, as being Lord and Heir of all ^{Christ’s}
 Things, *yet for our sakes, became poor,* ^{Life.}
that we through his Poverty might become
rich, was frequently destitute of the

Conveniencies of Life, and subject, at
 all times, to the innocent Infirmities of
 human Nature; yet we do not find that
 they gave any Perturbation to his Mind.

^b *Foxes have holes, and the Birds of the*
Air have nests, but the Son of Man hath
not, of his own, *where to lay his Head*,
 is the Description he makes of his own
 Circumstances; ^c but what he wanted
 of this kind was *occasionally* supplied by
 several of his more wealthy Followers,
 who are recorded, as making Provision
 for him, out of their own Substance, and
 entertaining him from time to time at
 their Houses. And tho’, upon any e-

S 2

mergent.

^a 1 Cor. viii. 9. ^b Matth. viii. 20. ^c Bp. Smil-
 broke’s Vind. p. 420.

mergent Necessity, it was in his Power to supply himself in the same *miraculous* manner, as he oft provided for others; yet where *human* Means could be us'd, it was more consistent with his Wisdom, to reserve his Miracles for a more *important* Occasion. Tho' therefore (as ^d the Apostle speaks) *God hath put in Subjection to him the Powers of the World to come*, and, on some *extraordinary* Conjunctions (such as his long Temptation in the Wilderness, and bitter Agony in the Garden,) did, even, in this Life, send down *these ministering Spirits to minister* unto him; yet, that it was neither necessary in itself, or compatible with the Scheme of his *Humiliation*, for them to do the same upon the common returns of Appetite, no one, I think, can imagine.

His going
up to the
Fig-tree
no blot
upon his
Omnisci-
ence.

A Tree there was in the way, which might have supply'd his Wants upon the present Occasion, had it not been barren; and, (besides *the Acquiescence* of his *Divinity*, which may very well be admitted in the common *Actions* of his Life) it is but supposing, that this Tree stood in the *Road-side*, and that our Saviour, going that Way, (whether he found Fruit on it, or no) intended all along to work a Miracle upon it, and, by its speedy

^d Heb. ii. 5,

speedy withering away, *emblematically* to shew his Disciples the near approaching Ruin and Desolation of the *Jews*; and then all the supposed trouble of going up to it, and disappointment afterwards, which seem to cast an Imputation upon his *Omniscience*, vanish into nothing.

There seems to be mere Difficulty in- Or Wisdom.
deed in clearing our Saviour from the other Imputation, that of the breach of *common Prudence*, in Case he had Thoughts of finding Fruit upon the Fig-Tree, before the proper Season was come. But, to set this Matter in a true Light, we shall endeavour to shew, *First*, 'That, at the Time, when our Saviour went up to this Fig-Tree, it was a Season proper to expect to find Figs in *Judea*; and, *Secondly*, that the Words of St. *Mark* may be so understood, as to comport very well with this Circumstance.

Whoever considers the *Series* of History, and the strict *Connection* of the subsequent Actions and Discourses of Jesus, as they are recorded both by St. *Matthew* and St. *Mark*, will soon be convinc'd, that this Miracle on the Fig-Tree happen'd about the *eleventh* Day of the *Jewish* Month, *Nisan*, on *Tuesday*, very probably, before the *Passover*; for

That there were Figs in *Judea* at this Time prov'd,

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the

the Passover, we know, was kept by the Jews on the *fourteenth* Day of *Nisan*, which answers to the latter end of our *March*: So that our Business is to shew, that at *this Time of the Year* there were Figs in *Judea* ripe, and fit for eating.

From *sa-
ared*

^f When *Moses* sent away the Spies to search the Land of *Canaan*, it was, we are told, ^g *in the Time of the first ripe Grapes*, and, that ^h *they returned from searching the Land after forty Days*, and brought from thence ⁱ *Pomegranates, and Figs*, as well as *Clusters of Grapes*. Now the LXX Version says, That it was in the *Spring* when the Spies set forward, and *Philo*, in his *Life of Moses*, seems to be of the same Opinion; for he introduces him, as *dismissing* the Spies, and telling them, *that the Season was then the fittest for discovering the goodness of the Country, because it was Spring*; and, as *charging* them not to return, till *Summer* was come, *that they might bring of the Fruits of the Land for a Sample*. Supposing then, that it was about the middle of the Spring ^k (which began in *Judea* about the middle of *January*) that the Spies set out, and that they were gone *forty Days*; it will follow, that they return'd some few Days before

^f Dr. Pearce, part 3. p. 8. ^g Numb. xiii. 20.

^h Ver. 25. ⁱ Ver. 23. ^k Vid. Pearce, Part 3. p. 7.

fore the *Passover*: and if the *Figs*, which they brought, as well as the *Grapes*, were ripe, and full grown, then were the ripe *Figs* in *Judea* at the very same Time, that our Saviour is here said to look for them. But this is not all.

Solomon, in his Book of *Canticles*, gives us a lively Description of the Spring, and, among other Signs of its being come, makes mention of this, that ¹ *the Fig-Tree putteth forth her green Figs, and the Vines, with the tender Grape, give a good smell; or (as it may more literally be render'd) the Fig-Tree hath begun to give a flavour to her young Figs, and the Vines a good smell to the tender Grape.* Now, if, in the middle of our *January*, the *Figs* were so forward, as then to give a Flavour, it is reasonable to think, that, in so warm and fruitful a Climate, there might be ripe ones, about the latter end of *March*, which is the precise Time when our Saviour sought for them upon this *Fig-Tree*.

Our Saviour indeed instances in the *Tenderness of the Branch of the Fig-Tree*, and in its putting forth Leaves, as the natural sign of the near approach of the *Summer*; but 'tis of the ordinary

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or

¹ Ch. ii. 13. ² Mark xiii. 28.

or Garden Fig-Tree, that he makes this Observation, which, (according to the *Talmudists*, cited by our learned *Light-foot*) brought not its Fruit to maturity, till about five Months after the *eleventh* Day of *Nisan*, i. e. much about the latter end of our *August*.

and pro-
fane Au-
thors.

The Truth is, ⁿ there were in *Judea* Fig-Trees of different Kinds; and, besides the *ordinary* sort, which our Saviour here speaks of, the *Jewish* Writers make particular mention of one early Kind, called *Banoth Shuach*, which never wanted Leaves, and very seldom Fruit. Nay, *Pliny* tells us of some sort of Fig-Trees in *Syria*, (under which Name he frequently comprehends *Judea*) ^o *that had always Leaves, and when the Fruit of the preceding Year was gathered, the new Fruit began immediately, and was growing all the Winter long.* And therefore we need less wonder at what the Emperor *Julian* asserts, ^p *That in Damascus, in Syria, there is a Sort of Fig-Tree, whose Fruit, both old and young, grows together, and lasts beyond the Year*; or at what a very eminent Traveller, and great Naturalist assures us, ^q “ That some sort of Figs grow in “ the

ⁿ Bp. *Smallbroke's* Vind. p. 405.
L. 13. c. 8. ^p *Jul. Ep.* 24.
Voyages to the *Levant*.

^o *Nat. Hist.*
^q *Tournefort's*

“ the *Archipelago* in Winter, Spring,
 “ and Summer, but that the *Garden*
 “ *Fig* is not ripe there, till the End
 “ of *August*, or the beginning of *Sep-*
 “ *tember*.” From all which, we may be
 allow’d to conclude, that there might
 be Figs in *Judea* fit to eat, at the Time
 when our Saviour went to look for some
 on this Tree : and therefore,

Secondly, To accommodate the Words of St. Mark (ἐν τῷ ἑνὶ καιρῷ συκῶν) to this Circumstance, some have thought fit to read them by way of Interrogation, *for was it not the Time of Figs?* Which small Variation, and including Part of the Sentence in a *Parenthesis*, will make the whole Verse run thus; *And, seeing a Fig-Tree afar off, having Leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon (and when he came to it he found nothing but Leaves) for was it not the Time of Figs?* The Interrogation, say they, has here the full Force of an *Affirmation*, and, by the help of the *Parenthesis*, is a very good Reason for what went immediately before it, *viz.* our Saviour’s Expectance of finding Fruit on the Tree, for well might he do so, when it was the proper Season for Figs.

The different Ways of explaining Mark xi. 13.

Others

Others imagine, ^f that by the Words, *for the Time of Figs was not yet*, may not improperly be meant, that the * *Fig-time*, or time, when Figs were wont to be gather'd, *was not yet come*; and so, keeping the Parenthesis, as before, in the middle of the Sentence, the Words will account for our Saviour's *going to the Fig-Tree, if haply he might find any Thing thereon*. The only Difficulty is to prove, that *the Time of Figs* may signify *the Time of gathering them*; but for this they produce several Authorities, and, among others, one in St. Matthew, who, in the Parable, tells us, that when the *Lord of the Vinyard sent his Servants to the Husband-men, that they might receive the Fruits of it, it was when the Time of the Fruit drew near*, i. e. when the Time of gathering it was at hand. For, if it is not supposeable, that the Servants were sent more early, than there was occasion, the *Time of ripe Grapes* might then be come, tho' the Time of *gathering them* drew but *near*.

Taking *the Time of Figs* then for the Time of *gathering them*, we must observe

^f Ibid. p. 13. * Vid. Kidder's *Demonst.* Part 2. p. 38, 39, where, by several parallel Instances he shews both that this may be the Sense of the Word *καιρός*, and that a *Parenthesis*, in the Place, is necessary.

serve farther, that, on the *second* Day of *unleavened* Bread, *i. e.* about five or six Days *after* our Saviour's thus coming to this Tree, the first Fruits of all that was then ripe were solemnly presented in the Temple, nor were the Owners of any Trees permitted to *gather in* their Fruit, but oblig'd to let it hang (how ripe soever it was) until that Day was come; and, consequently, if no Fruit Trees were as yet gather'd, our Saviour was far from acting a ridiculous part, in expecting to find something upon a Fig-Tree, that look'd so promising at a Distance.

But the clearest Solution seems to be that, which arises from what has been observ'd concerning the different kinds of Fig-Trees, which grew in *Judea*, and the different Times of their Fruit's coming to Maturity. † For, if there were two Sorts of Fig-Trees in *Judea*, the one much earlier than the other, and thence two Seasons of ripe Figs, the one much later than the other, and (as 'tis natural to suppose) the *later* much more common and plentiful than the former; the later was properly called *the Time of Figs*, and the *Evangelist* might very truly say, that, at the Time of the Passover, *it was not yet come, i. e. the*
common

† Dr. Pearce, p. 14.

common and ordinary Season for Figs was not come. "Some Trees, 'tis true, "might have Fruit at that Time, and "the Tree, which our Saviour saw at a "Distance, by the shew of its Leaves, "promised no less. In the early kind, "he knew Leaves came later than the "Fruit, and therefore Leaves, at this "Time, he took for a good Sign of its "being one of those; but a strong "and vigorous Plant (though it was "of the later Sort) might sometimes "put out its Leaves, before it had "Fruit; And therefore he came, not "with Assurance, but with some Degree of Doubtfulness, *if haply he might find any thing thereon*; and, "when he came to it, he perceived, "that, it being of the *later* Sort, had "nothing but Leaves, for the *common* "and *ordinary* Season, for such Trees "to bear Fruit, *was not yet come*.

His
Words
consistent
with
Christ's
expect-
ing Figs.

Thus, whether the Passage in St. Mark be understood by Way of *Negation*, or *Interrogation*; or whether the *Time*, mentioned therein, relates to the Time of *ripening*, or *gathering* the Figs, there can be no Folly or Absurdity in our Saviour's expecting Fruit on the Tree, he saw in the Way, since it is evident, from so many Testimonies, that in *Ju-
dea* there were certain Fig-Trees, which,

at

at this very Season of the Year, bore ripe Fruit, though the particular Tree, which our Saviour went to at this Time, might not happen to be of that *Species*.

It is to be remembered however, that this Tree (of what kind soever it was) stood " *by the Way*, i. e. " was a Tree of common Right, which grew in a common Field, and was distinct from such, as were planted in *Gardens* and *Orchards*, and had their proper Owners; so that the Fruit, which our Saviour expected to have had from it, would have been no other, than that of an *uncultivated* Tree, in a mere *Hedge-Row*, usually as common, and as plentiful, as Apples growing by the Highway in *Herefordshire*. But, even if the Tree had stood in enclos'd Ground, and been never so much the *Property* of any one Man, yet had our Saviour a right, and a *legal* right too, both to pull and eat of the Fruit of it, even in Virtue of *the Law*, that he then liv'd under: For thus we read, " *When thou comest into thy Neighbours Vineyard, then thou mayest eat Grapes to thy fill, at thine own Pleasure; but thou shalt not put any in thy Vessel: And when thou comest into the standing*

Christ's
destroy-
ing the
Tree nei-
ther an
unjust

Corn

" *Matt.* xxi. 19. " *Bp. Smallbroke's Vind.* p. 418.
" *Deut.* xxiii. 24, 25.

Corn of thy Neighbours, then thou mayest pluck the Ears with thine Hand, but thou shalt not move a Sickle into thy Neighbours standing Corn. This Law the Jewish Doctors extended (as indeed the Reason of the Law extends itself) not only to *Grapes* and *Corn*, but to *Olives*, *Figs*, *Dates*, and all other common eatable Fruits; and *Josephus* tells us,[†] That the Benefit of this Indulgence reached not only to *Jews*, but to all *Travellers* upon the Highway in *Judea*, whether they were *Natives* or not. So that had our Saviour found *Figs* on the Tree, and eat never so plentifully of them, he could have done no Injury to any Proprietor, because he only made use of the Privilege, which the common Law of the Country gave him.

Nor passionate.

But, supposing this Tree to have no Proprietor, and as it was in itself a *barren* Tree, useless and contemptible even to a Proverb, I see no Reason, why it might not (without Offence to any Man) be *blasted* as well as *cut down*, since it was a manifest *Incumbrance* to the Ground, and capable of occasioning the farther Delusion of other Travellers, by the *Spaciousness* of its Leaves. Nor can I conceive, why our Saviour should be deem'd to be in a Passion, when he did this,

[†] Antiq. Jud. L. 4. C. 8.

this, any more than a Farmer may be thought to be so, when he orders his Servants to cut down a barren and useless Tree. But then, if our Saviour had an higher View in doing this, and, ² if the blasting of this Tree served so great an End, as to be a *Type* of the approaching Destruction of the *Jewish* Nation, on Supposition of their want of Repentance, and persisting in their wicked Design to destroy *Jesus* himself (and that this was our Saviour's Intent in doing it, the two severe Parables which he spake to the *Jews* about that Time, and which, both *St. Matthew* and *St. Mark* adjoin to the Account of this Action, are a plain Indication) if the Destruction of the Tree, I say, answered this Purpose, it was justly sacrific'd to the publick Good, as a warning to the *Jews* to avoid the like Fate, by the Malediction of God, and his holy Prophet *Jesus*. ^a When, therefore the warning given, by this Action to the whole Nation of the *Jews*, was so very charitable and kind, it is mere Perverseness to cavil at the Miracle, because it was a *destructive* to one Tree.

But highly
Instructive.

The

^a Bp. *Smallbrooke's* Vind. p. 419. ² Dr. *Pearce*, Part 3. p. 19.

And truly
miracu-
lous Acti-
on.

The number of Christ's Miracles, which are of a *vindictive* Kind; are but three; his driving the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple, his permitting the Devils to enter into the Herd of Swine, and, here, his destroying the Tree, that had nothing on it but Leaves; the rest of his Works (in great Variety) are all of a beneficial Nature: But why should these be thought clearer and more incontestible Miracles, than the other, when they are both equally supernatural Acts, and require an Almighty Agent to effect them? Instead of drying up a flourishing Tree then, we will suppose, that our Saviour had made a dry and dead one revive and flourish; yet ^b might not *Jews* and *Infidels* with the same Colour pretend, that a Tree, which is supposed to revive and flourish, was never really dead, but retained a latent Principle of Life, which afterwards, on some incidental Occasion, exerted itself? Or might not a boundless *Scepticism* suggest, that a living Tree was *artificially* substituted in the room of the dead one? In short, if our Saviour's other Miracles of a *benign* Nature, such as curing, with a Word, the most desperate Diseases, healing the Impotent, and reviving the very dead themselves, could not then,

and

^b Bp. Smallbroke's Vind. p. 427.

and cannot now overcome the unreasonable Prejudices of *Infidels*, the miraculous flourishing of a dead Tree would no more have been consider'd, as a *supernatural* Act, than the causing of a flourishing Tree to wither immediately, and die, with one omnipotent Word. For when Men have once imbib'd strong *Prejudices*, and are obstinately bent against Conviction, whether the Work, designed for their Cure, be of a *merciful*, or *vindictive* Nature, it makes very little Alteration in the Case; since the miraculous *Blossoms* and *Fruit* of *Aaron's* Rod (to use a Comparison suitable to our present Subject) did no more prevent the *Murmurings* and *Disobedience* of the *Israelites*, than the miraculous *Hail* and *Fire*, which smote the Vines and Fig-Trees of the *Egyptians*, cured them and their King of their *hardness of Heart*.

And now, to take a Review of what has been said on this Subject. Since our blessed Saviour, who * *took not on him the Nature of Angels, but the Seed of Abraham, was, in all Things, made like unto his Brethren*, and subject to the innocent Infirmities of humane Nature, which he, nevertheless, thought not proper, by any *miraculous* means, to remedy,

A sum of
the
whole
Answers

T

* *Heb. ii. 16, 17.*

medy, or to exert his *Divinity* upon every little Occurrence of Life : Since, beyond Dispute it has been prov'd, that there were in *Judea* Fig-Trees, of a very early kind, which had Fruit in full *Maturity* before the time of the *Passover*, or at the time, when our Saviour, in his Return to *Bethany*, went to find Fruit on *this* ; nor are the Words of St. *Mark* incompatible with this Circumstance : Since this Tree, barren as it was, was nevertheless intended to be the Subject of a Miracle, and by its hasty withering away, at our Saviour's *Execration*, a Type and Figure of the speedy Destruction of the *Jewish* Nation : Since, had it born Fruit, its standing *in the Way* made it of common Right, or, had it been *enclosed*, a particular Law, provided for that purpose, submitted it to the Use of every Traveller, that was minded to gather of it : And, lastly, since a Miracle of this kind, served to such excellent Uses, was at this time *more* necessary, and in all respects *as* convincing, as if it had been of a *merciful* and ^c *beneficial* Nature ; there is certainly no Appearance either of Folly, or Ignorance, or Injustice, or Passion, or Ill-nature, in our Saviour's doing it, as is pretended : And that he could not possibly *impose* on his

^c Bp. *Smallbroke's* Vind. p. 430.

his Disciples in this Instance, so, as to make them believe what never was done, is manifest from the Scripture-account of their Attendance on him, and being present at this whole Transaction; namely, at his Imprecation of the Fig-Tree, and its subsequent withering away.

Thus ^d St. Mark informs us, that when the *Eventide* was come, Jesus went out into *Bethany* with *the Twelve*, and that on the Morrow, when they were come from *Bethany*, he was hungry. Now it is plain, that when he cursed the Tree, ^e the Disciples heard it; that they came to *Jerusalem* with him; that with him they returned the next Evening to *Bethany*; and that, in the next Morning, as they passed by, namely, in their return to *Jerusalem*, they saw the Fig-Tree *dry'd up from the Roots*, whereupon, we are told, that *Peter*, and (as ^f St. Matthew adds) *the other Disciples*, that still attend Jesus, took Notice of that wonderful Event, and said unto him, *how soon is the Fig-Tree, which thou cursed'st, wither'd away?* So that, from this whole Deduction, it is evident, that the twelve Disciples did *personally* accompany Jesus from the very beginning;

No Fallacy in this Miracle.

T 2

^d Mark xi. 11, 12.
compared together.

^e Ver. 14, 15, 19, 20.
^f Matt. xxi. 20.

ning, to the end of this marvellous Transaction; that they were *Eye-witnesses* of the whole Miracle, wherein there was no possibility from them to be impos'd on; and, consequently, no Reason for the *blasphemous Suggestion*, of his *taking a secret Opportunity beforehand, to lay his Carpenter's Ax to the Root of this Tree.*



S E C T. XVII.

*Of his Healing the Impotent Man
at the Pool of Bethesda.*

The Ob-
jection. “**B**UT, whatever may be said in Vindication of Jesus’s *curfing the Fig-Tree*, his Cure of the *Impotent Man* at the Pool of *Bethesda*, is a Tale so blindly, so imperfectly, and with such monstrously incredible Circumstances, related, as ought to be rejected with Scorn and Indignation. For, excepting St. *John’s Gospel*, where do we find the least mention of this Pool of *Bethesda*? *Josephus* has professedly written an History of the *Jewish Nation*,

“ tion, and would doubtless have omit-
 “ ted nothing, that tended to the Ho-
 “ nour of his Country, or the Mani-
 “ festation of the Providence of God o-
 “ ver it ; and yet we neither find him,
 “ nor any other *Jewish* Author, giving
 “ any account of this miraculous Pool ;
 “ tho’ it is very presumable, that, had
 “ the Story been true, they would have
 “ boasted not a little of this singular
 “ Instance of God’s distinguishing Care
 “ over his *peculiar* People. But, al-
 “ lowing the silence of other Writers to
 “ be no Argument against St. *John*, yet,
 “ to give his Story a better air of Cre-
 “ dibility, he should have told us a lit-
 “ tle more minutely the true Occasion
 “ of the Angel’s descent into this Pool,
 “ how oft in the Week, the Month, or
 “ the Year he condescended to do it ;
 “ why one diseased Person *only* receiv’d
 “ the Benefit of it at once ; and why
 “ no better Care was taken, by the Pro-
 “ vidence of God, or the Civil Magi-
 “ strates of *Jerusalem*, in the disposal
 “ of that Benefit, so as to give the Pre-
 “ ference to those, that deserved it best,
 “ and not to those, that could best
 “ struggle for it. But, if St. *John* is
 “ defective in these material Circum-
 “ stances, he is absurd and ridiculous
 “ in his relation of others. For, of all

“ other impotent Folk, those whom he
 “ specifies, *viz.* the *halt*, the *blind*, and
 “ the *wither'd*, were the most improper
 “ Persons in the World to lie at this
 “ Pool, *expecting the troubling of the*
 “ *Water*. And therefore, whatever
 “ may be said in Commendation of this
 “ *impotent* Man's *Patience*, his *Under-*
 “ *standing* must be under some Suspi-
 “ cion, for attending so long, in Ex-
 “ pectance of a Cure, which it was
 “ morally impossible for him to attain.
 “ Nor can we see what Care the *Evan-*
 “ *gelist* has taken of his Master's Ho-
 “ nour, when he tells us, that he cur'd
 “ but one Man at this Pool; and yet, at
 “ the same time, assures us, that there
 “ was a *great Multitude* of miserable
 “ Objects *lying in the Porches*. For if
 “ there were so many, why did not he
 “ cure them all? If he could not,
 “ there's an end of his Almighty Power;
 “ and if he would not, an Imputation
 “ falls upon his Mercy and Compassion;
 “ and which way soever we consider it,
 “ his Conduct is not only blameable,
 “ but makes his Power of Healing dis-
 “ putable, and gives us some Reason to
 “ question, whether, in curing this one
 “ Man only, he really wrought any
 “ Miracle at all. For, tho' the Man's
 “ Disease was of a long Continuance, no
 “ less

“ less than *eight and thirty Years* ; yet
 “ many Instances may be given of In-
 “ firmities of human Nature, which, in
 “ time, (especially in old Age,) are
 “ known to wear off. And, if this was
 “ the Case of the *Impotent* Man before
 “ us, where is the wonder, if Jesus,
 “ observing such *Symptoms* in him, bad
 “ him take up his *Couch* and begone,
 “ for he would soon be *made whole* ?
 “ Had he indeed healed the whole *Mul-*
 “ *titude of impotent Folk*, this Suspicion
 “ had been removed ; but, since, of so
 “ many, he chose only to cure this *one*
 “ Man, it affords Matter of Speculation,
 “ whether it was the *most*, or the *least*
 “ diseased amongst them, and whether
 “ a *natural*, or *miraculous* Cause effect-
 “ ed his Cure,

Now, in answer to all this, it may The
 not be improper to premise in general, Cures of
 that, tho' it should be suppos'd, that the Pool
 there are some Difficulties in this Ac- and of
 count of St. *John*, relating to the State the Impo-
 and Circumstances of the Pool of *Be-* tent Man
thesda, which, at this distance of Time, two di-
 considering the Silence of other *ancient* stinct
 Authors, and the usual Brevity of the Things.
Evangelist, as well as our Ignorance of
 many *Jewish* Customs, and peculiar
 T 4 ways

ways of speaking, may not possibly be explain'd to a critical Satisfaction ; yet will it not therefore follow, either that St. *John's* whole Account of this *Pool of Bethesda* is an incredible *Romance*, or that our Saviour's Cure of the *Impotent* Man, at that Place, was not a real Miracle.

'Tis true indeed, *Place*, as well as *Time*, is a Circumstance unavoidably attending *Matters of Fact* ; but, in the Account of Matters of Fact, the Circumstance of the particular Place may oftentimes be *indifferent*, and *insignificant* ; *i. e.* when it adds no new Confirmation, or Illustration to the Transaction itself. Nay, a narrative of Transactions may be really *true*, when the Scene of them is mistaken, miscalled, or even quite forgotten. However, 'tis certain, that the Account of such a mere Circumstance is no farther *material*, nor does it properly affect the Story itself, but only as it serves to give some new Light or corroborating Evidence to it.

* We must observe then, that, in this Narration of St. *John*, there are two distinct Miracles to be separately consider'd ; that which was wrought by the *Pool*, *after its Water was troubled*, and

* Dr. Pearce's Vind. Part 4. p. 6.

and that, which our Saviour wrought upon the *Impotent* Man. The Miracle upon the *Impotent* Man, is what St. *John* primarily intended to relate; and his mention of the Pool of *Bethesda* is only introductory to it. To shew indeed how this Man became the Object of our Saviour's Notice and Compassion, he speaks of him, as among a Multitude of People, that were diseased; and to shew, for what Reason such a Multitude of diseased People were met together, he makes mention of the *sanative Virtue* of the Pool; but the Pool was not his principal Subject; it is only mention'd for the sake of something that follows: nor is the Miracle, he was concern'd to establish, that of the Pool, but that of our Saviour's curing the Man, without any use of the Pool at all. And therefore whatever Difficulties attend our accounting for the Miracles of the Pool, the Cure of the Man stands good, nor is it at all affected by them.

But instead of evading, let us see what account may be given of this Pool. Some Account of this Pool.
 * At *Jerusalem*, not far from the Place called the *Sheep-Market*, (or rather ^d the *Sheep-Gate*) there was a *Bath*, (for so the Word *Κολυμβήθρα* signifies) built for the

* Dr. *Pearce's* Vind. Part 4. p. 7. † *Neb.* xxxi. 39.

the use of such of the common People, as lov'd to swim, and bathe themselves in the Water ; which, in those warm Climates, was both a pleasant and healthful Exercise. Around this Bath were built five *Porches*, or rather *Portico's* (for so the Word *στοα* signifies) which were design'd, as Places for the People to walk in, under covert, in the heat of the Day, if they had no mind to bathe ; and for the Conveniency of dressing and undressing in the Shade, for those that had : For which Reason, both the *Bath* and *Portico's* were call'd by the Name of *Bethesda*, i. e. *the House of Mercy or Kindness*, because the erecting them was a great Act of Kindness to the common People, whose Indispositions in hot Countries requir'd frequent Bathing ; tho' others suppose that the Pool receiv'd that Name from the miraculous Cures, which were perform'd there.

At this Bath, about the Time of the *Feast*, (most probably the *Feast of the Passover*) a great Multitude of impotent Folk, of blind, halt, and wither'd, lay in the *Portico's*, waiting for the moving of the Waters. For (as St. John says) an Angel went down *Kata Καρπον* at the Season (i. e. of the *Passover*) and troubled the Water, and whosoever then first, af-
ter

ter the troubling of the Water, stepped in, was made whole of whatsoever Disease he had. This is St. *John's* account of the Matter: And from hence it does not appear, that the Waters of this *Pool* or *Bath*, had ever received this miraculously healing Virtue, before the *Time of this Feast.*

Now it is well known, that the Feast of the Passover lasted eight or nine Days, including the Days of *unleavened Bread*, and possibly this miraculous Quality of the Bath might have begun on the first Day, or perhaps some few Days before; but how it came to be discover'd at first, we have no Intelligence from Scripture, only we may suppose, that some *Jew*, of an *Infirm*, or otherwise diseased Constitution, bathing one Day for his Pleasure and Recreation, might find himself surprizingly cur'd, upon a preternatural Motion of the Water, and that other infirm People, hearing thereof, might likewise repair to the Pool, in hopes of finding the same Benefit, and so by degrees the Place be crowded with Multitudes, expecting the *troubling of the Water.*

When its
Sanative
Virtue
began, and
how long
it lasted.

Why, at the Time of this Feast only, the Waters of this Bath had a sanative Quality imparted to them, the *learned*
and

and *ingenious* Author, from whom I have borrow'd this Account, has this *not improbable* Conjecture.—That our Saviour, having gone through all the Cities of *Galilee*, and most of the other Parts of the Country of *Judea*, preaching and healing Diseases, came up to *Jerusalem* at this *Passover* (which was the *second*, since the Commencement of his publick Ministry) with an Intent to fix his Abode there; and that, to prepare the Way before him, God might give this Pool an healing Quality, thereby to shew the *Jews*, that the divine Power in *Jesus* was coming among them, and, what they saw miraculously done by its Waters, was but an *Earnest* and *Emblem* of what this great *Messenger of the Covenant* was going to do for them; but that they, instead of giving him a kind Reception, *took Council together how to take away his Life*, which made him *withdraw himself from them*, and thereupon the miraculous Virtue of the Water ceas'd.

However this be, 'tis certain that the preceding Account has this Advantage in it, that it clears the Story from several Difficulties, and especially from what may be suppos'd to arise from the Silence of *Jewish* Writers. For if this Miracle was but of a *Week* or *ten Days*
Con-

Continuance, 'tis no Wonder it came to be forgotten so soon, when, (in so short a time) its Credibility was hardly well establish'd. Taking the Story however in a less advantageous View, and supposing (as the Crowd of Commentators do) that this miraculous Virtue of the Pool lasted for some Term of Years among the *Jews*; yet, even in this Case, I cannot perceive any thing, that may not be fairly accounted for.

It may seem a little strange indeed, *Josephus's* that the *Jewish* Historian, *Josephus*, ^{Silence} should give us no Account of this Pool, ^{hereof} especially when the sanative Virtue of ^{account-} its Waters, occasioned by so extraordinary a Means, could not but redound to the Honour of his Country. But when it is considered, * that the like Omissions have been frequently made by other Historians, who have neglected to insert, in their Writings, several considerable Matters of Antiquity, merely because they were so familiar and well known to them: When it is considered, that *Josephus* is silent on several other Occasions, that bear some Relation to *Jesus*; that he does not so much as intimate *the Slaughter of the Infants at Bethlehem* mentioned by † *St. Matthew*; gives no clear Account of the *Roman Census*

* Bp. *Smallbrooke's* Vind. p. 498. † *Matt.* ii. 16.

Census or *Taxation*, that is recorded by ^z St. *Luke* ; and none at all of the *Galileans*, whose *Blood* Pilate *had mingled with their Sacrifices*, as related by ^h the same *Evangelist* : When it is consider'd, that, the miraculous *Virtue* of the Pool of *Bethesda*, and the miraculous *Cure* of the *Impotent Man* by *Jesus*, had so visible a *Connection*, that he could not, in decency, give an *Account* of the one, without making some mention of the other, and therefore chose rather to decline the *History* of both : And lastly, when it is considered (what is told us by *Tertullian*) “ That this Pool of “ *Bethesda*, which cured Diseases till “ the Coming of *Christ*, and some time “ after, ceas'd to be beneficial to the “ *Jews*, upon their final *Perseverance* “ in *Blasphemy* and *Infidelity* against “ *Christ* ;” there is no wonder at all, that *Josephus*, who was so very defective in other Matters, should omit giving us an *Account* of a Pool, whose sanative *Virtue* was extinct and gone, when first he wrote his *Antiquities*, and which he could not well mention, without giving an implicit *Honour* to *Christ*.

It

^z *Luke* ii. 1, 2.^h *Luke* xiii. 1.

* It may be observed farther, that, as *Josephus* wrote his History for the Information of the *Greeks* and learned *Romans*, who were *Heathens*; so he seems very tender of dwelling too much upon Miracles. Nay, he has omitted the mention of some, and endeavoured by natural Causes to account for others, which he undoubtedly did both believe, and teach too, as he was a *Jewish* Priest. Thus, in the *Israelites* passing over the *Red-Sea*, he makes it a doubt whether the *parting of the Waters* was occasioned by the *Command of God*, or by the *natural Course of Things*; and refers his Reader (as a parallel Event) to what befel *Alexander* and his Army, at the *Pamphylian Sea*.

But, after all, it is no improbable Conjecture of ⁱ some great *Criticks*, that *Josephus* did not entirely neglect to take Notice of this Pool, though he did it under a different Name; for he tells us of two Pools at *Jerusalem*, the one named *σεσθιον* and the other *ἀμύγδαλον*, which *ἀμύγδαλον* (upon a small Variation of the Original) signifies *great and eminent*, and is therefore thought to be the same, with that of *Bethesda* in *St. John*, as having that *Sur-name* from its mira-

He probably mentions it under another Name.

* Dr. Pearce's Vind. Part 4. p. 19. ⁱ Vid. P. Lamy de Tabernac. & Templo. L. 4. C. 5.

miraculous Cures. However this be, it is certain, that ^k St. *Jerome*, who himself had been at *Jerusalem*, makes mention of two Lakes, the one filled with the Rains, that came down in the Winter, and the other with Water surprizingly Red, as it were Blood, which, *by evident Signs, declares and testifies*, says he, *the Work that was anciently done in it*: ^l Nor has a modern Traveller omitted to tell us, that, when he was there, he saw, still remaining what is reputed the Place of this ancient Pool, and gives us the particular Dimensions of its length, breadth, and depth.

Whence
its fan-
ative Vir-
tue, diff-
erent Opi-
nions.

Thus it is plain, that near to *Jerusalem*, there was such a Place as the *Pool of Bethesda*; but how its Waters came by their fanative Quality, Opinions, in some measure, have been divided. Our learned *Hammond* (who sometimes affects a Singularity of Interpretation) supposes, that the Waters became *Medicinal*, by being impregnated with an healing warmth from the Blood and Entrails of the sacrificed Beasts, that were washed there; and

^k St. *Hieron.* Op. Tom. 2. in Lib. de Situ. & nominibus Locorum Hebræorum, p. 422.

^l *Maunder's Travels*, p. 107.

and that the *Angel*, in the ^m Text, is not to be understood of any of those *celestial* Beings, that are usually distinguished by that Name, but is a more general Appellation for a *Messenger*, an *Officer*, or *Servant* of the *Priest*, sent by him, at a proper Season, to stir the Water of the Pool.

The learned ⁿ *Bartholine* supposes, that these Waters were *naturally* Medicinal, and that their Commotion was occasioned by an extraordinary Fermentation of some *Mineral* in them; and therefore he makes the *Angel* no more than a *divine Power*, which originally gave them this Efficacy, though it was exerted in a *natural* Way. ° But besides, that the Word *ἄγγελος* seldom occurs in the *former*, and never in *this* Sense, in any historical Narrative in Scripture, there are these plain Objections against both Hypotheses, *viz.* that, be the Waters impregnated with what Ingredient we please, (had their Operation been *Mechanical*) they must necessarily have cur'd more than one Person, at every Commotion or Fermentation; and yet they never can be suppos'd of Efficacy enough to cure *all*

U

manner

ⁿ Vid. Annot. on 5th Ch. of St. *John.* ⁿ De *Paralyticis* N. Test. ° Bp. *Smallbrooke's* Vind. p. 507, &c.

miraculous Cures. However this be, it is certain, that ^k St. *Jerome*, who himself had been at *Jerusalem*, makes mention of two Lakes, the one filled with the Rains, that came down in the Winter, and the other with Water surprizingly Red, as it were Blood, which, *by evident Signs, declares and testifies*, says he, *the Work that was anciently done in it*: ¹ Nor has a modern Traveller omitted to tell us, that, when he was there, he saw, still remaining what is reputed the Place of this ancient Pool, and gives us the particular Dimensions of its length, breadth, and depth.

Whence
its sana-
tive Vir-
tue, differ-
ent Opini-
ons.

Thus it is plain, that near to *Jerusalem*, there was such a Place as the *Pool of Bethesda*; but how its Waters came by their sanative Quality, Opinions, in some measure, have been divided. Our learned *Hammond* (who sometimes affects a Singularity of Interpretation) supposes, that the Waters became *Medicinal*, by being impregnated with an healing warmth from the Blood and Entrails of the sacrificed Beasts, that were washed there; and

^k St. *Hieron.* Op. Tom. 2. in Lib. de Situ. & nominibus Locorum Hebræorum, p. 422.

¹ *Maunder's Travels*, p. 107.

and that the *Angel*, in the ^m Text, is not to be understood of any of those *celestial* Beings, that are usually distinguished by that Name, but is a more general Appellation for a *Messenger*, an *Officer*, or *Servant* of the *Priest*, sent by him, at a proper Season, to stir the Water of the Pool.

The learned ⁿ *Bartholine* supposes, that these Waters were *naturally* Medicinal, and that their Commotion was occasioned by an extraordinary Fermentation of some *Mineral* in them; and therefore he makes the *Angel* no more than a *divine Power*, which originally gave them this Efficacy, though it was exerted in a *natural* Way. ° But besides, that the Word *ἄγγελος* seldom occurs in the *former*, and never in *this* Sense, in any historical Narrative in Scripture, there are these plain Objections against both Hypotheses, *viz.* that, be the Waters impregnated with what Ingredient we please, (had their Operation been *Mechanical*) they must necessarily have cur'd more than one Person, at every Commotion or Fermentation; and yet they never can be suppos'd of Efficacy enough to cure *all*

U

manner

^m Vid. Annot. on 5th Ch. of St. *John.* ⁿ *De Paralyticis* N. Test. ° Bp. *Smallbrooke's* *Vind.* p. 507, &c.

manner of Diseases, in an Instant, and at one single Immersion, as the Waters of *Bethesda* are represented to do. And therefore, waving all such Suppositions, we may be allow'd to set the Authority of an ancient Father of the Church against these *modern* Names, and say, ^p " That the Angel, which descended at a certain Season, gave the Water its *medicinal* Virtue ; for the Nature of the Water was not sanative in itself, (if it had, Cures would have always happened) but the whole depended on the Virtue communicated to it by the *Angel*.

Most probably
from the
Action of
an Angel.

That God has frequently employ'd the Ministry of Angels in Affairs of this kind ; and that Angels, thus employ'd, by their natural Powers and Faculties are qualified to execute his Will ; that they are strong, quick, and penetrating, as the Wind, as Lightning, as a flame of Fire, and are therefore oft in Scripture express'd by these Metaphors ; and that, by means imperceptible to us, they can dispose the Temperature of the Air, and order the Influence of all other Elements so, as to produce Effects, either hurtful or sanative to human Bodies, is evident from a great variety of Instances, that might be produc'd, both out of

^p Vid. *Theophylact*. in C. 5. *Johan. Evang.*

of the *Old* and *New* Testament. But why God, at this Time more especially, vouchsafed the *Jews* such an *Angelick* Favour and Dispensation, as this at the Pool of *Bethesda*, is not so easy a matter to resolve.

The *Jews*, we know, had been God's peculiar People, and honoured with many signal Tokens of his divine Presence among them; ^{Why God at this time only vouchsafed this Favour to the *Jews*.} but now these were no more. All Prophecy, the *Urim* and *Thummim*, and the miraculous Fire from Heaven were entirely ceas'd; and therefore it may be suppos'd, that in some measure to supply the want of these, in order to keep up a lively Sense of God's Providence among them, and to shew, that he had not absolutely deserted his People, this miraculous Descent of an Angel, at certain Seasons, or of some Power equivalent to it, was vouchsafed them. But there is not the like Reason for any such Miracle *now*, when God ^{Why it cur'd but one at once.} *hath spoken to us by his Son*, and by him given us a compleat and final Revelation of his Will.

If however the End of this *Angelical* Descent was to keep up the Sense of a divine Providence among the *Jews*, then was this End better answer'd, by the Cure of *one* Person only, at every Com-
 U 2 motion

motion of the Water, than by the Cure of *Multitudes at once*: And the Reason is, because the Cure of one Person only, at one time, evinc'd that the Effect was *miraculous*; whereas, upon Supposition, that many Persons had been cured at once, these Cures might have been imputed to the natural Virtue of the Water, either as it was impregnated with some sort of Mineral, or as the warm Entrails and Blood of the *Jewish* Sacrifices might give it a *Balsamick* and healing Quality. * Had Numbers been cur'd at once, I say, the Sceptick then might have ask'd, "Where is the Wonder of this? Do not many *Medicinal* Baths cure various kinds of Diseases, and Multitudes of such, as labour under each Disease, provided their Case be curable? Had one only indeed been cur'd, the first that could get in, after the *troubling of the Water*, there would have been then a great and real Miracle? But now the Numbers make the Fact suspicious: It seems to have been a natural Quality in the Waters, because it is so universal. To make it appear a Miracle, its Effects should have been confin'd and limited to particular Times, and Persons, or otherwise

" wise

* Dr. Pearce, Part 4. p. 14.

“ wise so circumstantiated, as that the
 “ *Power* of God, and not of *blind Na-*
 “ *ture*, might have been apparent in
 “ it.” But all this Language is ef-
 fectually silenc’d by the Method, which
 the wise Providence of God took in this
 Case.

What the stated Times of the Angel’s Descent were, in order to confer a Cure on some *particular* Persons ; or what Care the *Magistrates* of *Jerusalem* took, in order to distribute the Cures, according to every one’s Merit or Exigence, the *Evangelist* has not thought fit to acquaint us ; because these are Circumstances no ways affecting our Saviour’s Cure of the *Impotent* Man, which was his chief Concern to relate. He tells us however that there was a Place of Reception for the *Sick* and *Impotent* Folk, very convenient for their stepping down into the Water upon its Commotion ; and, ’tis generally conjectur’d, that this Commotion happen’d once every Year, and, probably, about the Time of the *Passover*, when Jesus perform’d this Cure upon the *Impotent* Man.

At what
 Times it
 happen-
 ed.

But even supposing the *Impotent* Man to know all this, *viz.* That the Angel descended but once a Year ; that, upon

No Folly
 in the im-
 potent
 Man

U 3

such

for wait-
ing so long.

such Descent, one only Person was to be healed ; and that he himself stood in no fair Competition for that Benefit ; yet, since his Case was desperate, and his Malady incurable by Physick, he had nothing indeed else to do, but to wait at the Pool, in hopes of some Success at last. His Prospect, at present, was not very promising ; but who could tell, but that, in Time, he might prevail with some kind Friend or other to help and assist him into the Pool, at the proper minute of Commotion ? And accordingly, ' some have observ'd, that, by his Answer to our Saviour's Question, [*Wilt thou be made whole ?*] Sir, I have no Man, when the Water is troubled, to put me into the Pool ; he means no more, than modestly to desire him (whom at that time he did not know) to supply his want of an Assistant, by putting him into the Pool himself at a proper Season.

And this, by the way, suggests a good Reason, why, out of the Multitude of infirm People, that lay at this Pool, our Saviour made choice of this Man only, namely, because he was peculiarly unqualify'd for a Cure by the Waters, on account, both of his own natural

* Vid. *Theophylact. in Loc. & Erasmi Paraph. in Lor.*

natural *Incapacity* to *step in first him-
self*, and of his *Poverty*, in having none
to assist him in stepping into the Pool
upon its first Commotion. " He was,
in short, an Object most to be compas-
sionated of any in the Place, and more
especially so, as he had been now a
very long time in this Condition, and
yet still depended upon the good Pro-
vidence of God for an Opportunity to
be cur'd, at one time or other; for
which Reason our Saviour might very
justly single out him, and leave the rest
to the *standing* Miracle.

To cure whole Multitudes at once
indeed sounds more *popular*, and car-
ries the Face of more extensive Good-
ness: But, besides that our Saviour
might very probably, in this Case, con-
form to the Rule of Cure, establish'd
providentially at *Bethesda*, which was to
heal *but one* Person at one Time. His
great Design, in every Action of this
kind, we know, was to prove his Cha-
racter and Commission from God, to
which End, one single and uncontesti-
ble Miracle was as sufficient an Evi-
dence, as a Thousand. The Truth is,
as he was a *free* Agent, he had certain-
ly a Liberty to bestow his Favours as
he pleas'd, and to chuse such particular

Why
Christ
cur'd but
one out of
so many.

U 4 Objects

Objects of Cure, as he, at any time, should think fit, consistently with the great End and Design of all his miraculous Cures, which was to give a clear Attestation of his Divine Authority. And that the Cure, now before us, was such an Attestation, will best appear by considering a little the Nature of the Distemper itself.

The Nature of his Disease, and its Incurableness.

The Word ἀδύναμις, which we render *Infirmity*, or *Weakness*, is indeed a general Name for almost all Distempers; but *here* it is so limited in its Signification, by the Circumstances mention'd in the Context, that it can properly denote no other Disease, than what we call a confirm'd *Palsy*. ^w For do the Symptoms of any other Distemper so exactly agree with the Description given of this Infirmity, both in point of so long Continuance, and such extreme Weakness at the same time? Does not the Word *Weakness*, in its most obvious Sense, exactly answer to such a Relaxation of the *nervous System*, or some part of it, as made the Man incapable of stepping quick enough from the Place, where he lay, into the adjacent Pool, upon its Commotion? And (what is no mean Circumstance) does not our Saviour

our make use of * the same Form and Method of Cure to this very Man, that he applies to other *Paralyticks*, *Rise, take up thy Bed, and walk*; a Form very proper to Persons thus distemper'd, both to express the Weakness of their past Condition, and the Compleatness of their present Cure?

These Symptoms, and concurring Circumstances, (as I take them) are a sufficient Proof, that the Distemper, here under debate, was the *Palsy*: And that a confirm'd *Palsy* of *thirty and eight Years Continuance* is past the Power of Art, (much more the Power of Imagination) to remedy, and only curable by a Miracle, no Physician, I think, can doubt: And therefore, to look back upon what has been said.

The Miracle of the Pool of *Bethesda*, being a distinct thing from our Saviour's Cure of the *impotent* Man, that he found there; tho' we are not strictly accountable for every Difficulty occurring in that Story, yet since, whether we suppose that the *sanative* Virtue of its Waters was of a *short* or *long* Continuance among the *Jews*, very good Reasons may be given for the Silence of *Josephus* concerning them; very good Reasons, why their Virtue, at this Time,

The Sum,
and Con-
clusion of
the
whole
Answer.

* *Matt.* ix. 6. *Mark* ii. 2. *Luke* v. 24. *John* v. 2.

Time, rather than any other, proceeded from the Operation of an Angel, and not from any *natural* Cause; and (to ascertain the Miracle) why their Virtue was imparted to no more, than one Person at once: Since the impotent Person, who lay there, was a very fit Object of our Saviour's Compassion, which, upon proper Considerations, confin'd itself, at this Time, to the Cure of one Person only, who, by the Symptoms that appear in the Story, was afflicted with an inveterate *Palsy*, incurable by all the Rules of Art; there is plainly, neither any Forgery in the *Evangelist's* Story of the Pool of *Bethesda*, nor any Fallacy in the wonderful Cure, which our Saviour wrought there: And therefore to conclude this Subject in the Words of ^y a *Physician* of no small Note, having this very Cure under his Consideration; *It was prodigious, says he, that this Paralytick should live so many Years: But, I believe, that God preserv'd him (as it were) in a dying Condition, that, in so difficult, impossible, and unheard-of Cure, and upon the Fame of such a mighty Miracle, it should be impossible for all the Infidels in the World, and even for those*
among

^y Ader. de Morb. Evang. apud Critic. Sacr. Tom. 9. p. 3669.

among them, that have the most obdurate Hearts, to doubt of the Divinity of Christ: And so we go on to his opening the Eyes of the Man that was born Blind.



S E C T. XVIII.

Of his Curing the Man that was born Blind.

“ **B**UT, as there are several Mala- The Ob-
 “ dies incident to the Eyes, some jection.
 “ that are, and some that are not, cu-
 “ rable by Art or Nature ; it will be
 “ no easy matter for us to distinguish,
 “ of what kind or degree this poor
 “ Man’s Distemper was, and conse-
 “ quently, whether there was any *real*
 “ Miracle in the Cure. Had Jesus in-
 “ deed, merely by speaking the Word,
 “ enabled the Man to see perfectly,
 “ much then might have been urg’d
 “ in Vindication of the Miracle ; but
 “ his having recourse to such human
 “ Means, as Washings, and Ointments,
 “ not only destroys the Merit of the
 “ Cure, but exposes the whole Story
 “ to *Contempt* and *Ridicule*. For what
 “ a strange,

“ a strange, whimsical, unaccountable
 “ *Eye-salve* was this, made up of Dirt
 “ and Spittle, and fitter indeed to put
 “ the Eyes out, than cure them? unless
 “ we can suppose, that Jesus *under-hand*
 “ made use of a proper Medicine, or had
 “ privately in his Mouth some *Sanative*
 “ and *Balsamick* Matter, which, dissolv’d
 “ in Spittle, might effect the Cure.”

No Fraud
 in the
 Cure,

Of all the miraculous Works, which
 our Saviour did, none, I think, is rela-
 ted so fully, and set off with so many
 Circumstances, to prevent the least Sus-
 picion of Fraud, as this, of his *curing*
the Man that was born blind. * The
Evangelist has expended a whole Chapter
 upon it; and therein acquainted us with
 some previous Questions of the Disciples,
 which led to it, the uncommon manner
 of our Saviour’s performing it; the Sur-
 prise and Astonishment of the blind
 Man’s Neighbours, when they saw such
 an Alteration wrought in him; the Man’s
 open and undisguised Relation of the
 Matter, and repeated Attestation of the
 Greatness and Reality of the Cure; the
 great Disturbance and Perplexity, which
 it gave the *Jews*; their examining and
cross-examining the Man, who still con-
 tinued firm and uniform in his Account;
 their tampering with his Parents, who
 avow’d

avow'd the Truth of his being born blind; and, at last, (when they saw that they could *prevail nothing*, but that the more they examined, the more Evidence they found,) their Rage and Malice, which carried them to such a degree, as to *excommunicate* the poor Man, and cast him out of the Synagogue. These, and some more Circumstances are told in such a plain convincing manner, as shews the whole Story to be too well founded, for any Cavils, or mere fabulous Inventions to impair or weaken. For had there been any Deceit in the Case, 'tis very strange, that none of the Multitude should perceive any thing of it; but much more so, that the Malice of the *Jews*, with all their Inquisitiveness, should not be able to detect it.

Our Saviour *might have had some sanative Balsam in reserve*, but what would all the Balsam in the World have availed towards the Cure of the Distemper, we are now considering? *Physicians* and *Chirurgeons*, that have studied the Texture of the Eye, and made the Cure of its Maladies their chief Employ, may give us indeed something, that will strengthen the *Optick Nerves*, when weaken'd or relax'd; or, by some outward Operation may remove such Obstructions, as would otherwise

wife impede the Sight : But *since the World began* (^b as the poor Man here excellently argues) *was it not heard, that any Man opened the Eyes of one that was born blind.* And therefore it is Folly, as well as Malice, at this distance of Time, to oppose a *Matter of Fact*, attested with such Strength and Clearness, and, in the room thereof, to insinuate a Forgery, and suggest a suppositious Remedy, which, if even admitted, could not be competent to effect the Cure.

Or Folly
in the
Manner
of it.

Various indeed were the Methods of our Saviour's working Cures, by a Touch, by a Word's speaking, by outward Applications, but always such an Application, as had no natural Efficacy in it. Had he made use of any *Medicinal* Remedies, there might then have been some room to doubt whether the Cure had been a miraculous Operation : But as he rejected all such Methods, as might have a Tendency to the Cure, this removes our Suspicion, and plainly demonstrates, that the Effect could be ascrib'd to no visible Means, but the invisible and irresistible Power of the Agent. And indeed, the very uncommonness of the Application is so far from *diminishing*, that it rather *inhances* the Credit and Reputation of the Miracle ;

The Miraculousness of it.

cle ; at least, it must be allow'd, to be as great and triumphant a Display of a supernatural Power, to work a Cure by Means, that have no fitness to that End, as it is to do it without the use of any Means at all: for the more improper the Methods are to answer the Design, the more amazing is the Power in making them subservient to it: In the former Case, the Man has only the Distemper to contend with, but here he has a double Difficulty to conquer, and must not only controul the Power of the Disease, but change the repugnant Qualities of Bodies, and make them productive of quite contrary Effects. Though therefore the Method, which our Saviour made use of on this Occasion, was of no Significance, as to the Cure of the Man's *Blindness*, yet it was highly pertinent, in order to convince the Spectators, as well as the Patient himself, of his Almighty Power, which could produce such a wonderful and extraordinary Effect by no other Application, than what was indifferent, if not obstructive to the Cure.

The Truth is, ^d a blind Man's coming suddenly to his Sight, (abstracted from the Agency of any Person, as fore-knowing or foreseeing the Event,) is either no Miracle at all, or if it be a Miracle, has not

Wherein
Christ
was cer-
tainly
left to his
Liberty.

^d Defence of Scrip. Hist. Part 2. p. 44.

not the Appearance or Evidence of one : But if such an Effect follows, in consequence of any Act or Operation performed by any Person, as declarative of what will happen, this points out and demonstrates to us both the Miracle, and Person, that wrought it. Our Saviour, no doubt, could have cured this Man with *a Words speaking* ; but, as the use of this Ointment was declarative only of his Intention to cure him, and, in this case, every whit as significant, as if he had said, in so many Words, *receive thy Sight* ; I can see no Reason, why he might not, without any Imputation of *Folly* or *Whimsicalness*, be left to his own Discretion to chuse, which of the two Actions he was pleased to make use of, since both were equally expressive of his divine Power : And so we proceed to his *turning Water into Wine*, at a Marriage-Feast.

S E C T.



S E C T. XIX.

Of his turning WATER *into* WINE.

“ BUT, how can it be imagined, The Ob-
 “ that so grave, so sober, so jection.
 “ serious a Man, as Jesus is repre-
 “ sented in Scripture, should ever
 “ vouchsafe his Presence at a *Wedding*,
 “ which, among the *Jews*, as well as
 “ other Nations, was usually a Scene
 “ of such Levities, Diversions, and Ex-
 “ cesses, as were utterly inconsistent
 “ with his Character. A Person of his
 “ reserv’d Temper would have scarce
 “ been invited at all, one would think ;
 “ but if he had been invited, it is rea-
 “ sonable to presume he would have
 “ declined going. Instead of this, to sup-
 “ pose that he was such an Encourager
 “ of Excess and Intemperance, as to
 “ turn a large Quantity of Water into
 “ Wine, to the Tune of *seventeen* or
 “ *eighteen Firkins*, for the use of those,
 “ that *had drank* enough, if not too
 “ much before (as the Text seems to
 “ imply) is quite destroying his *moral*
 “ Character, and giving an untoward
 X “ Umbrage

“ Umbrage of Suspicion, that himself
 “ was not rightly sober, when he gave
 “ such a blunt, surly, and undutiful
 “ Answer to his Mother. The only
 “ way then to make all these Incon-
 “ sistencies meet, is to renounce the Mi-
 “ racle at once; and to give into the
 “ *Gloss*, which the *Gentiles* of old, by
 “ way of Objection put upon it, viz.
 “ *a That the Company having exhausted*
 “ *the Bridegroom's Stock of Wine, and*
 “ *being in Expectation of more, rather*
 “ *than that the Bridegroom should be put*
 “ *to the Blush, Jesus undertook, by a*
 “ *Trick of Art, to meliorate Water into*
 “ *what they called Wine; i. e. having*
 “ *some spirituous Liquors at hand, he*
 “ *mingled them with a quantity of Wa-*
 “ *ter, and so, by the Help of the Go-*
 “ *vernour of the Feast, (who vouched it*
 “ *to be incomparably good Wine,) palm'd*
 “ *a false Miracle upon the Guests.*

Christ's
 grave and
 sober De-
 portment

Our blessed Saviour, indeed, was a
 Person of a very grave and serious De-
 portment, insomuch, that, whatever In-
 stances may be found of his Pity and
 Compassion to Mankind, of his grieving
 and being troubled, and even weeping
 upon some Occasions; we can meet with
 none of his *laughing*, nor any Token of

a

a Mirth or Joy extraordinary, in the whole History of his Life. But we must not from hence infer, that he was of a *sullen*, or *unsociable* Temper, or, in any degree, an Enemy to such Forms of Civility and good Manners, as were then in use. If therefore we can but suppose at present (what hereafter will be evinced) that this Marriage of *Cana in Galilee* was between Persons of his own Kindred or Acquaintance, and that, by the very Rules of celebrating such Festivals among the *Jews*, all Excess or Intemperance was excluded; then will it follow, that it could be no Disparagement to our Saviour's Character to accept of the Invitation, and be present at such a meeting.

Among us indeed, especially among the *Vulgar* sort, there are sometimes, on these Occasions, Liberties taken, that are not so very justifiable; but, among the *Jews*, there was always the greatest Decency and Sobriety imaginable observ'd, in the celebration of their Marriages. ^b To this purpose a Governor of the Feast (and, as some say, of the Sacerdotal Race) was always chosen, whose Office it was to have the Superintendency of the Dishes and the Wine, and to oblige the Guests to observe all the

The Decency observ'd in Jewish Marriage Feasts.

X 2

De-

^b *Lewis's Antiq. of the Heb. Rep. Vol. 3. p. 302.*

Decorums, that Religion required: And, not only so, but other Persons, at this time, were likewise appointed to break *Glass-Vessels*, as a common Signal, to give the Company notice, that they had already drank enough, and were not permitted to run to Excess. Under this *Regulation*, 'tis scarce imaginable, that the Guests, at a *Jewish* Marriage, could be guilty of any Intemperance, and least of all at this in *Galilee*, where our Saviour's Presence and Observation, the Gravity of his Behaviour, and the Seasonableness of his Discourse, may well be presum'd to heighten the *Decorum*, and to keep all the Company under a proper Restraint.

The
meaning
of *when*
Men have
well drunk,
Joh. ii. 10.

What therefore the Governor of the Feast says to the Bridegroom, in relation to the Water, that was turned into Wine, ^d *every Man, at the beginning, doth set forth good Wine, and WHEN MEN HAVE WELL DRANK, then that which is worse*, is to be understood only as a general Representation of a Custom, usual at other *Festivals*, which was, to bring the best Wine at first, and towards the conclusion, that which was worse; which Custom, (as the Governor tells him) was not observed here: for the Difference between this Entertainment and

* Dr. Pearce's Vind. Part 3. p. 26. * *John ii. 10.*

and others is, *that thou hast kept the good Wine until now.* So that the Phrase, *when Men have well drank,* is only a Circumstance thrown in to illustrate the Comparison, or describe the latter end of a Feast, and has no manner of Reference to the Condition of the Company then present.

But, allowing the Words ὅταν μεθύσῃσι to be a Description of the Condition the Company was then in, yet will it by no means follow, that they had proceeded to any Intemperance, because the Words are equally capable of an *innocent*, as well as *vicious* Meaning. ^c Μεθύειν indeed, in its primitive Signification, means no more than *drinking after the Sacrifice*: and, as there is nothing in the *Etymology*, that determines this to be done to any Excess, or beyond the proper Bounds of Joy in a Festival; so there are several Instances in Scripture, wherein it was certainly done according to the Rules of Sobriety and Moderation. Thus (to mention one out of many) in the LXX Version of *Genesis*, where it is said, that *Joseph's Brethren* ^d *drank and were merry with him,* the Words are ἐμεθύοντο μετ' αὐτοῦ; and yet the Circumstances of the Feast plainly shew that no Excess, or the least approach

X 3

proach

! Dr. Pearce, part 3. p. 27.

! Gen. xliii. 34.

proach to it, is intended by the Expression. For they knew him not then to be any other than the *Governor of Ægypt*, nay, it is said *& that they were afraid*, as tho' he *sought occasion against them, to fall upon them, and take them for Bondmen*; and therefore we may well presume, that they were too much upon their guard, and solicitous about their own Safety, to give any way to Intemperance in his Presence. And if the Expression here, and in ^h several other Passages, may be taken in a *virtuous* Sense, (unless we can imagine that St. *John* design'd to expose his Master's Behaviour on this Occasion) we cannot but conclude, that he intended we should understand him in the most favourable manner.

Christ
might in-
nocently
go to the
Marriage,
and why
he was
concern'd
to go.

But let us for once suppose the worst; viz. That notwithstanding these wise Orders and Institutions, in the Celebration of *Matrimonial* Feasts among the *Jews*, some would be still apt to run counter, and indulge their Appetites to Excess; yet it will not therefore follow, that our Lord could be any Partner in the Guilt. In publick Assemblies of Men of promiscuous Tempers, we see daily, that, though the vicious part

^f Gen. xliii. 34.

^h Whitby's Annot. in Loc.

part may pollute and debauch themselves by Intemperance, Persons of a contrary Disposition do innocently partake of all regular and lawful Refreshments, without any Stain to their Virtue and Character. And though a *good* Man would not delight in such Societies, nor a *prudent* Man rashly and heedlessly frequent them ; yet since our Saviour, who by the unspotted Purity of his Nature, was secured against every bad Impression, came *not to call the Righteous, but Sinners to Repentance*, and for this purpose, must be supposed to take all proper Occasions of meeting and conversing with them ; since now he was about to open his *Commission*, and had here a fair Opportunity of working his first Miracle in the Presence, and for the Conviction of numerous Spectators ; and, lastly, since the Invitation, in all Probability, came from his own Kindred ; for Tradition tells us, that the Persons, whose Wedding was then celebrated, were *Alphæus* or *Cleopas*, and her, who, in Scripture, is called, *Mary, the Sister of our Lord's Mother* (as it seems not unlikely from his Mother's being so solicitous for the supply of Wine, and taking upon her to direct the Servants of the House, that they were either her *Relations*, or very intimate *Acquaintance*)

since our Saviour, I say, was in this Situation, it was highly expedient, both in discharge of his *prophetick* Office, and the Obligations of Friendship or Consanguinity, for him to vouchsafe his Presence at this Wedding, when he was invited.

That he
encourag'd no
Excess
there.

Had he indeed, when he was there, given Encouragement to Intemperance among the Guests, (even though it had been by an Act of Generosity) much then might have been said in Diminution of his Character: But, since the Supply of Wine, wherewith he miraculously furnished them, will, upon Enquiry, appear, neither so large in its Quantity, nor so superfluous in its use, as is pretended, all Suggestions of this horrid Nature, that our Saviour administer'd to their Excesses, and was himself *a little intoxicated*, should for ever be silenced, and detested. ^k We indeed, in our Translation, say, that the *Water-Pots*, wherein the Wine was created, *contained two or three Firkins a-piece*;

That the
Quantity
of Wine,
which he
supplied,
was not
so very
large,

but the *Learned* of all Communions have, of late, looked a little more nicely into the *μεasures*, or *Measure* here spoken of, and have brought it much lower, than a *Firkin*. The LXX Translators ^l use it for the *Bath* of the *Jews*, and that (according to

^k Dr. Pearce's Vind. Part 3. p. 30. ^l 2 Chron. iv. 5.

to *Calmet*) contains less than 30 *French* Pints, which are not so much, as six Gallons of our Measure; but *Lamy* sets it still lower, and makes it hold very little more than 20 *French* Pints, *i. e.* under four Gallons of our Measure. Nay, *Le Clerk*, and others mentioned by *Calmet*, say, that the *μεσπτης* held about twenty-five *French* Pounds of Water, which falls short of three Gallons of our Measure; and the Learned Bishop *Cumberland* (supposing the *μεσπτης* of *Syria* to be here intended) computes it to have held less than one *English* Gallon, so that, according to this reckoning, the whole *six Water-Pots* might not contain more than about *fourteen* or *fifteen* Gallons of *English* Measure.

But not to reduce the Measure so low, If more, it was no Rest upon him; we will suppose, at present, that the Quantity of Wine, made by our Saviour at this Feast, was as large as our Translation represents it; yet, whoever considers the Nature of *Jewish* Marriages, ^m how they were celebrated with Feasting and Rejoycings, not only on the Day of Solemnity (as it is with us) but for six or seven Days after; and that, at these Feasts, not only all their Relations, Neighbours, and Acquaintance were invited, but that it was well taken likewise

likewise if any others (tho' not invited) would come to partake of the Entertainment, and bear a share in the Joy : Whoever considers this, I say, cannot but imagine, that a very large Quantity of Wine must needs be requisite, at such a time, and that, if the resort of a greater Company, than was expected (as it is not improbable that many more, than were expected, would come, on purpose to see Christ and his Disciples) had occasioned a Deficiency herein, the Wine, which our Saviour miraculously produced, was to be a Supply, not for that Day only, but for all the succeeding Days, until the Time of the Feasting was expir'd.

but rather
Com-
mendation
to him.

Nay, even supposing that our Lord, upon this Occasion, did not confine himself to a precise Quantity, proportionate to the Company, or Period of the *Festival*, and (what is more) ⁿ that some of the Company might abuse his Liberality by their Intemperance (which is a Concession, that cannot be gathered from the *Text*) yet can't he therefore be charg'd with ministring to that Excess, by making such an ample Provision, any more, than we can charge the *Providence* of God with being instrumental to all the *Gluttony*, and *Drunkennes*, which is com-

committed in the World, merely because it affords that Meat and Drink, which Men of inordinate Appetites abuse to Excess. The Truth is, as it is an high Commendation of Providence, that it crowns us with Plenty (whatever use we make of it) and bestows upon us all Things *richly to enjoy*; so was it not unbecoming a Person, invested with a *divine* Commission, to give, on this Occasion, an eminent Instance of his *flowing* Liberality, and, by his generous Provision for the Family, to leave a grateful *Memorial* of his benevolent Regard to two Persons, that were his Relations, and had just enter'd into the honourable State of Matrimony.

But there is a farther Consideration, that might possibly induce our Lord, when he was turning the Water into Wine, to make more than what was immediately wanted, and that is, the clearer Proof and Demonstration of the Miracle. ° The Wits of *Cana* might fancy that the Wedding-Guests were all intoxicated, that they had lost their Taste, and cou'd not distinguish between Wine and *Punch*: But when these Scepticks heard, that some of this wonderful Wine was left, and might perhaps taste of it themselves, and be forced to acknowledge,

° *Stevenson's Conference upon the Miracles*, p. 65.

knowledge that it was really good Wine, as the Guests reported it to be ; this must have put an End to all their Cavils, and given them full conviction of Christ's Divine Power, as indeed the *Evangelist* tells us, that the Effect of this Miracle was ^p the *Manifestation of his Glory*.

Why he
did not
immediate-
ly work
this Mi-
racle.

It is to be observed, however, that in working this Miracle our Saviour (contrary to his usual Practice) stood upon the Reserve, and did not immediately gratify his Mother's Desire. In the following part of his Ministry, we find him frequently complying with the Peoples first Requests ; but his Circumstances *then* and *now* were different. ^q When his Fame had been spread abroad through all the Regions round about, and every Tongue set forth his noble Acts, it better became him, as Occasions offer'd, readily to exert his Power : but, at present, he was not known to the World ; his Disciples were but few and fresh comers, and even his most intimate Acquaintance had not any due Apprehensions concerning him. Now he, who made the Glory of God, and the Good of Souls his principal Aim, was oblig'd to set out *warily*, and to stop, as much as might be, the Mouth of

^p *John* ii. 11. ^q *Stanhope's Epist. & Gosp.* vol. 2. p. 26.

of Prejudice and Cavil : And nothing could go farther towards fixing him a general Reputation, than *Modesty*. To put himself forward of his own Accord, or to yield to a Mother's first Motions, might look like an Eagerness to catch at Admiration and Applause, to fall in with an intemperate Zeal for advancing his own Honour, and a shewing what he *could do*, rather than discerning what was *fit* for him to do. And therefore when his Mother came, and acquainted him, that her Friends were in danger of wanting Wine for the Company, he return'd her an Answer, in Terms so seemingly rough, that Interpreters have been at some trouble about their Meaning ; *Woman, what have I to do with thee ? my Hour is not yet come.*

We mistake the Matter much however, if we think, that the Word *γυνή*, which we render *Woman*, was any Title of Disrespect or Indifference ; (as it seems to be in our Translation) ^{His Answer to his Mother explain'd.} for it is frequently us'd by the best Authors, when the highest Marks of Esteem are intended. The polite *Xenophon* himself puts it in the Mouth of one of the *Persian Chiefs*, when he was addressing himself to a Captive Lady, and comforting her under her unfortunate Circumstances :
And

And certainly a Time there was, that our Lord call'd his Mother by this Appel-
 lation, when he was far from being *sur-ly* or *undutiful* to her, when he was hanging on the Cross, and recommend-
 ing both his Mother to the Care of his *beloved* Apostle, and that Apostle to the Affection of his Mother, *'Woman, be-
 hold thy Son.* And, in like manner, *what have I to do with thee?* Is a Phrase
 ' sometimes us'd in Scripture, where no-
 thing of Anger or Passion is conceiv'd,
 but only some dislike express'd, and a
 gentle Rebuke given; which seems to
 be the Case now before us.

The blessed Virgin comes and com-
 plains to her Son, that there was likely
 to be a deficiency of Wine. Her Com-
 plaint implies a Request of help from
 him in this Exigence; nor is it impro-
 bable, that hereupon she might desire
 to see him work a Miracle, and that a
 little Vanity might prompt her to this
 desire. " But, in Cases where an hea-
 venly Father's Honour is to be the
 governing Principle, an earthly Mo-
 ther's Authority is quite superceded.
 Though therefore, he, who *made all
 Times*, could not be under Subjection
 to *any*, or restrain'd in his Power at
 one

' *John* xix. 26. ' *Vid.* 2 *Sam.* xvi. 10. " *Stan-*
hope's Epist. and Gospel, Vol. 2. p. 70.

one *Hour*, more than another; yet, to give a Gracefulness and Efficacy to all his Works, there was an Order to be observ'd, nor were Miracles to be wrought at all Adventures, for gratifying the Curiosity of standers-by, or the Importunity of Friends or Relations, but had their proper Seasons, whereof his Divine Wisdom was the best Judge, and not to be directed by any other.

This seems to be a probable Sense of the Words: And where then, I pray, is all that *Passion* and *Peevishness*, that *Ill-nature* and *Waspsishness*, so often, so loudly complain'd of (as if they were enough to *destroy the Credit of the whole Miracle*) in our Saviour's telling his Mother (for his Answer imports no more) *that, in the Business of manifesting his Glory by Miracles*, (wherein he approv'd himself to be the Son of God, wherein he had no relation to her, nor she any right to interfere) *she was to leave him to do what he thought proper*.

And now, to look back upon what has been said: Since the manner of celebrating *matrimonial Festivals* among the *Jews* was put under such Regulation, that the most grave and serious Persons might frequent them, without any Imputation on their Characters; since

The Sum
of what
has been
said.

to

to this Marriage of *Cana in Galilee* our Saviour was more particularly oblig'd to go, as being either a Relation, or intimate Acquaintance to the Parties espoused, and therefore could not, without a breach of good Manners, as well as neglecting an Opportunity of doing much good, decline their Invitation; since, in his miraculous Production of Wine upon this occasion, the Quantity was not so large, as our *Translation* represents it; or, if so large, was not intended for one Day's Subsistence only, but to last out the Remainder of the Festival, and all that time to supply the whole Company, which usually came in great Numbers; and, lastly, since the Reply which our Saviour made his Mother, was, at the most, but a gentle Rebuke for her intruding into Matters, which did not properly concern her, but depended upon his infinite Wisdom only to determine: Since these Things are so, I say, then was there plainly, neither any *Levity* in our Saviour's going to this Marriage; nor any *Encouragement* of Excess, in his supplying the Company with Wine; nor any Signs of *Neglect* or *Disesteem*, and much less, of any worse Cause, in the Reply he gave to his Mother: And, that the Miracle itself (which comes next to be vindicated)

cated) was not perform'd by any artful Trick of his own, or Collusion with others, the Circumstances attending it are sufficient to convince us.

For, tho' the same Almighty Power, which, every Year, turns Water into Wine by the impregnating Warmth of the Sun, concocting the Juices of the Earth, and the Sap of the Trees, which produce it, could have done *so* by *this* in a moment of time, without any Helper; tho' he could, with the same Ease, have created Wine out of nothing, and fill'd the empty Vessels with a Word of his Mouth; yet was he pleas'd to use the Ministry of others, the Servants of the House, and such as could not be thought in any Confederacy with him. These pour'd the Water in with their own Hands; these therefore were so many unexceptionable Witnesses, that, what themselves knew to be *common* Water, was quickly after, by the same Hands, drawn out *generous* Wine.

Without the Privity of these Servants, 'tis hard to suppose that he ever could be able (allowing he were so abandon'd) as to convey any *spirituous Liquor* into so many different Water-pots: hard to suppose, that he would refer this mix'd and adulterated Liquor to the Taste and Approbation of the *Ruler of the Feast*,

Y

whose

No Trick
or Collu-
sion in
this Mi-
racle.

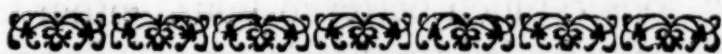
whose Judgment and Palate were known to be less vitiated, and, consequently, less liable to be imposed on, than those of common Guests : hard to suppose, that this Ruler of the Feast, a Man of Sobriety and Gravity, and who (as the Text informs us) *knew not whence the Wine was*, should give it so large a Commendation, if he perceived to be no more, than a little Water *dash'd* : and still more hard it is to conceive, that this sham Miracle should have such an Effect upon the Disciples, who, (as it was the first) were doubtless inquisitive enough about the Particulars of it, as to engage their Faith and Adherence to him for ever after.

But a Demonstration of his divine Power.

These are some of the Difficulties that attend the Supposition of an Imposture in this Case : but, on the contrary, the Testimony of the Servants, the Judgment of the Ruler, and the Conviction of the Disciples, plead very strongly for the Reality of this Miracle. And well indeed might his Disciples be convinced, * when they saw the Creatures of this lower World so absolutely at their Master's disposal, as to make them start from their fix'd Laws of Being, and change their Natures and Qualities in an instant. He only, they knew, could repeal

* Stanhope, *ibid.* p. 76.

repeal those *Laws*, who made them: He only could alter their *Forms*, who at first appointed them: And when this they saw done, without invoking the Aid of any higher Power, they could not but esteem it an Evidence, that there was no higher Power to have recourse to, and, consequently that his Power and Authority was *Supreme*.



S E C T. XX.

Of his Curing the Paralytick at Capernaum.

“ THE Story of this Miracle, The Ob-
 “ (which even surpasses that of jecton.
 “ the *Pool of Bethesda*) is so full of mon-
 “ struous and palpable Absurdities, that
 “ it requires no great Sagacity to detect
 “ them. For (not to ask for what
 “ possible Reason there should be such
 “ a mighty crouding about the House,
 “ where Jesus, who was far from being
 “ respected in the Place, chanced to be)
 “ if the Mob was so great, that there
 “ was no coming at him, the *Paralytick*
 “ and his Bearers, one would think,
 “ should have waited a little, until the

" Multitude was dispersed, rather than
 " be at the Trouble of getting *Ropes*
 " and *Pullies*, to hoist him up to the
 " top of the House, and *Hammers* and
 " *Hatchets* to uncover the Roof, and
 " make an Hole large enough, for the
 " Man and the Bed to be let through.
 " This shews a great Zeal and Eager-
 " ness indeed ; but, if the Cure was in
 " such haste to be done, it would have
 " look'd much better in Jesus, either to
 " have healed the Patient at a Distance,
 " or ordered the People to make way
 " for him, than to have suffered such
 " Waste and Havock to be made in the
 " House. In short, had there been such
 " a Multitude about the Doors, as is
 " pretended, it would have been next
 " to impossible, for the poor Man and
 " his Couch to be hoisted over their
 " Heads, and raised to the Top of the
 " House ; highly unreasonable, that
 " the Master of the House should suffer
 " its Roof to be broken up without
 " some Resentment ; but most of all so,
 " that Jesus should not give forth the
 " *healing* Word, or, by his divine Power,
 " disperse the People, that the *Paraly-*
 " *tick* might have present Access to
 " him."

Both

Both ^a St. Mark and ^b St. Luke give us an ample Account of what happen'd at *Capernaum*, and how the Inhabitants of that Place were affected, the time that our Saviour was there before. They tell us, that, when he taught them in the Synagogue on the *Sabbath-day*, all the People were *astonished at his Doctrine, for he taught as one that had Authority, and his Word was with Power.* They tell us, that, when in their Sight he cast out an *unclean Spirit*, crying out for fear, and declaring him to be *the Holy One of God*, they were all amazed, and spake among themselves, saying, *What a Word is this? What new Doctrine is this? for with Power and Authority he commandeth the unclean Spirits, and they obey him.* They tell us, that, while he was in *Simon's House*, *all the City was gathered together at the Door*, and, that, upon their seeing him do so many wonderful Works, heal the Sick of divers Diseases, and cast out many Devils, his *Fame immediately spread abroad through all the Regions round about Galilee:* and therefore it might well be expected, that, when he returned to the same City again, not only the Inhabitants of the Place, but the People of every adjacent

Country

Why such
a Crowd
about the
Door.

Y 3

^a Chap. i. 21, &c.

^b Chap. iv. 31, &c.

Country should run together in great Numbers, even tho' they had seen him never so often, and had little or no Estimation for him.

Take any Man of Note, of whatsoever Country, and it will appear, that, upon any famous Exploit, upon any remarkable Success, or laudable Action, People, who had seen him times out of number, and knew his Person as well perhaps as their own, wou'd, notwithstanding their Prejudices and Prepossessions, their Enmity and Aversion, press about him with the utmost Earnestness. When *Julius Cæsar*, for instance, return'd *five* times in Triumph after signal Victories and Conquests, what did the *Roman* People do? To say that they only flock'd to see the Pomp and Pageantry of the Triumph is a great Mistake: Leave but *Cæsar* out of the triumphant Chariot, and far the greatest part of the Sight would have been lost. And if such Actions, which scatter so many Mischiefs, and cause so much Desolation around them, will occasion such a Resort of People, what a Concourse may not be expected, to behold one, who had been saving the Lives of Mankind, and rescuing them from those Diseases and Calamities, which made Life an

† Bp. Clavering's Visit. Charge, in 1730.

an insupportable Burden to them? This was the Case of our blessed Master, the Prince of Peace, and the Reliever of his Brethren. He returned home, after he had dispensed abroad his manifold Blessings, in curing all manner of Infirmities, whithersoever he went. The Fame of these beneficial Miracles spread itself far and near; and therefore no wonder if People came, in great Crouds, to see him, who had done such wonderful things for the Children of Men.

But least of all is it to be wonder'd, that any Person in this *Paralytick* Case, or any Friends of his, that were solicitous for his Cure, should be so eager and impatient to gain Admittance to his Presence. They perceiv'd, that oftentimes it was no easy Matter for him to disengage himself from the importunate Attendance of the People: They remember'd, that, the last time he was among them, the Croud continu'd about the Door till Night, and that, early next Morning, ^d *a great while before it was Day*, he left the City, and departed into a solitary Place: They saw that ^e the Day was declining, and ^f the Sun very nigh sett; nor could they tell, but, that, as soon as he had done Preaching,

Why such
Impatience
to come
at Christ.

Y 4

and

^d Mark i. 33. ^e Ver. 32. ^f Luke iv. 42.

and the Croud a little dispersed, he would retreat and retire, as he had done before; and therefore they thought it highly concern'd them, to make all the haste they could, and not run the Hazard of losing so precious an Opportunity. Away therefore they carry the impotent Man: but when^s they came to the Court-Yard (for so we may render τὰ πρὸς τὴν θύραν) they found the *press* so great, such a Multitude of People got together, in order to hear him preach, that, with all their Endeavours, they could not come nigh him: Whereupon, as ^h the *Evangelist* tells us, *they uncovered the Roof, where he was, and when they had broken it up, they let down the Bed (through the Tiling, says ⁱ St. Luke) wherein the Sick of the Palsy lay.* But, to have a right Notion of this Matter, we must observe, that the Manner of building among the *Jews*, was, in many respects, different to what has been obtained among us.

The way
of build-
ing Hou-
ses among
the *Jews*. Their Houses were for the most part,
* very low, consisting but of two Floors
or Stories, and the Roofs of them were,
not ridg'd, but flat, surrounded with

a

^s Dr. Pearce's Vind. Part 4. p. 26. ^h Mark ii. 4.
ⁱ Chap. v. 19. * Modern Travellers assure us,
that the Houses in *Judea* are, at this Day, low-
built, and flat-roofed. See *Sandy's*, p. 36.

a Battlement about Breast-high, according ^k to God's own Injunction. Here it was ^l that they used to walk in the cool of the Day, ^m under a Tent, or other Cover, to serve them for a Shade; here ⁿ to talk and discourse together in private; here ^o to pray, and meditate on religious Matters, ^p in little Closets built for that Purpose; and (^q as our Saviour's Words seem to imply) here sometimes to preach or discourse publicly to the People.

Now there were two Ways, which the *Jews* had, of going up to the Tops of their Houses; the one was by a Pair of Stairs within the House, leading up to a Trap-Door which lay even with the Roof; and, though fastened within for security against Thieves, might, on any Occasion, be lifted up. The other Way was on the out-side of the House, where, by a ^r Ladder, or Pair of Steps or Stairs, either

Their
Stairs
without
Doors.

^k Deut. xxii. 8. ^l 2 Sam. xi. 12. ^m 2 Sam. xvi. 22. ⁿ 1 Sam. ix. 25. ^o Acts x. 9. ^p Lewis's Antiq. vol. 4. p. 75. ^q Matth. x. 27. ^r Authors never differ about the *reality* and common Use of these exterior Steps, but only about the *Form* or Make of them. F. Lamy takes these *Κλίμακες* to be such, as are now generally used by Workmen; but I must beg Leave to differ from that Learned Author, because it seems more reasonable to suppose them such, as were more safe and substantial, from the frequent use of Men, Women, and Children,

either fix'd or moveable, they could ascend to the Roof when they pleased, without ever going into the House itself; and to this our Saviour seems to allude, when he foretels to the *Jews* the Swiftness of that Destruction which should overtake them, '*Let him, that is on the House-top, not go down into the House, neither enter therein, to take any thing out of the House*': For, unless we can suppose that his Advice was that Men should venture their Necks, by throwing themselves down from the Tops of their Houses, his Words must imply, both that they had such Stairs placed on the out-side of their Houses, and that it was an usual thing for them both to ascend and descend by them.

How the
Paralytick
might be
let down.

Since this then was a general Fashion of *Jewish* Houses, it is not improbable, that this House at *Capernaum* was of the same Figure and Make; and that, for the better Convenience of being heard, both within Doors and without, Jesus might then be preaching at one of the Windows of an Upper-room, when this sick Man was brought in a
Couch,

dren, to ascend to the House-Tops, and to carry necessary Burdens up thither. Bp. *Claverings*'s Charge, in 1730.

' *Mark* xiii. 15. ' *Dr. Pearce*, part 4. p. 28.

Couch, or ^u sort of *Elbow-Chair*, by four Persons, *who carried him*. The Croud, however, was so great, and the Company so attentive to our Saviour's Discourse, that no Care was taken to make way for him, and therefore his Bearers bethought themselves of another Expedient. They went round a private way; and, coming to the Stairs, which stood on the out-side of the House, up these they carry him, and presently gain the Top: But finding the Trap-Door (or *Way of the Roof*, as the *Jewish Rabbins* call it ^x) shut, and fasten'd against them, immediately they go to work, and forcing it open (which St. Mark calls *uncovering* and ^y *breaking up the Roof*, because the Door, which lay even

^u St. Mark calls it *κράββατος*, and St. Luke *κλινίδιον*: So that these two Words are synonymous. Now *Hesychius* explains the Word *σκιμπόδιον* by *εὐτελές κλινίδιον μονοκοίτιον*, from whence it may be remark'd, that there were *κλινίδια* no larger than for one Person only, and of a much smaller Size, than the Word *Bed* conveys an Idea of to an *English* Reader. And this seems to be the Size of the Bed or Chair in this Place; for though four Persons help'd to carry the sick Man in it, yet it was no larger than what he alone could carry, as appears by the Story. *Pearce's Vind.* Part 4. p. 29. and Bp. *Clavering's Charge*. ^x Vid. *Liebtfoot* in Locum. ^y Ch. ii. 4. The Word *ἐξορύξαντες* in this Place does not so properly signify *digging* or using Instruments to that purpose, as *pulling* and *forcing* the Door out of its Frame. In this Sense St.

even with the Roof, when let down and shut, was reputed a part of it) convey'd him down that way (which St. Luke calls *letting him down through* ² *the Tiling*, i. e. through the Roof, which (except where this Door was) was all pav'd with large Tiles; and by this means found it no difficult Matter to *place him in the midst before Jesus*.

The Reasonable-
ness of
permit-
ting it.

This Account of the Matter, if it be true (and it seems indeed, at first Sight, to be far from an improbable one) removes most of the Objections at once. It takes away the Necessity of having *Ropes, Ladders, and Pullies, &c.* sent for upon this Occasion. It lessens considerably the supposed Damage done to the House, since the Roof-door is presum'd large enough to receive the *Chair* or *Couch*, wherein the sick Man was, without any farther trouble. It recommends the Character of *the good Man of the House*, since he possibly might be
so

St. Paul uses the Word, Gal. iv. 15. τὰς ὀφθαλμοὺς ὑμῶν ἐξορύττας, *pulling out your Eyes*, i. e. by Force, but not by *Digging*, in the proper and strict Meaning of the Word: For if the *Couch* or *Chair* was no larger than to hold one (as we said before) it might commodiously enough be *let* or *carried* down without widening the Passage, or making any Hole about it. Pearce's Vind. Part 4. p. 30. ² Κέραμος and τέγος (or, στέγη) are synonymous Words in the Greek Authors, as Steph. in Voce κέραμος informs us. Pearce's Vind. Part 4. p. 30.

so attentive to our Saviour's Preaching, as not to perceive what was doing, before he saw the Door forced open ; or rather unwilling to disturb such heavenly Doctrine, upon so slight an Occasion, as the breaking open a Door by those, whose only Motive was, to bring a sick Man to be cured by a Miracle : And it clears our Saviour's Conduct from any injurious Imputation ; since, as he was surrounded with a Circle of attentive Hearers, to whom he was dispensing the *Bread of Life*, and healing their Diseases, his leaving them, to go to the *Paralytick*, would perhaps have been more troublesome, and occasioned more Disturbance, than the letting him down in his *Couch*. Nor can it be thought consistent with Reason, to have dispersed the People upon this Occasion, since, as the Pains, which the sick Man and his Bearers took to get at Jesus, shew'd the Strength of their Faith and Confidence in him ; so the Reward, which he intended for it, was to be dispensed in as publick a manner, as possible, both for the Encouragement of the like Disposition in others, and for the Manifestation of his own Power and Glory : And so we go on to (what occurs next) his raising *three Persons from the dead*.



S E C T. XXI.

Of his Raising Three Dead Persons.

The Ob-
jection.

“ T H E very unnatural and *pre-*
 “ *posterous* Order of Time, in
 “ which these Miracles are recorded by
 “ the *Evangelists*, is enough to bring
 “ them under the Suspicion of Fable
 “ and Forgery. For these three Mi-
 “ racles, you must know, are not e-
 “ qually great, but differ in Degree.
 “ The greatest is that of *Lazarus*; next
 “ to it, is that of the Widow of *Nain’s*
 “ Son; and the least of all is that of
 “ *Jarus’s* Daughter. What then can
 “ be the Reason, that *Matthew*, *Mark*,
 “ and *Luke* (who all wrote their Gos-
 “ pels before *John*) should forget to
 “ record this remarkable and most il-
 “ lustrious Miracle of *Lazarus*? To
 “ aggrandize the Fame of their Master
 “ for a *Worker of Miracles*, was the De-
 “ sign of all the *Evangelists*; and, if it
 “ was not necessary that all of them
 “ should set down every Miracle of this
 “ kind, still it is absurd and unnatural
 “ to suppose, that any of them (espe-
 “ cially

“ cially the first Writers) should omit
“ the greatest of all, and only take no-
“ tice of the least. If *Matthew* indeed
“ had recorded only the Story of *La-*
“ *zar*us, *Luke* had added that of the
“ Widow’s Son, and *John*, lastly, had
“ remembred us of the *Ruler’s* Daugh-
“ ter, which the other *Evangelists* (for
“ Brevity’s sake) had omitted ; all then
“ had been well, and no Objection lain
“ against their Authority. But, as the
“ Case now stands, it will always be
“ Exception enough against this Miracle,
“ that it was never once mentioned by
“ the *first Historians*, nor indeed invent-
“ ed by the *last*, until he was above an
“ hundred Years old, and every Body
“ dead, that should have confuted
“ him.

“ But (besides this suspicious Circum-
“ stance) since Jesus thought proper to
“ raise no more than three Persons, why
“ he should prefer an insignificant Boy,
“ and Girl, and the obscure *Lazarus*,
“ to those of a more publick and de-
“ serving Character, to the useful Ma-
“ gistrate, or industrious Merchant,
“ whose Life is a common Blessing, and
“ Death a publick Loss; why no Hi-
“ story should give us any Account
“ what became of these three Persons
“ after their Resurrection, how long
“ they

“ they liv’d, and of what Use and Ad-
 “ vantage their restor’d Lives were to
 “ Mankind ; and why there is not the
 “ least hint of any Discourse they had
 “ with their Friends concerning their
 “ *separate* Existence, where their Souls
 “ had been, in what Company, and in
 “ what Condition (tho’ a Narrative of
 “ this kind would have been of excel-
 “ lent Service to Religion) is a Thing
 “ unaccountable.

“ We have therefore abundant Rea-
 “ son to presume, that there was either
 “ some Mistake, or some Collusion in
 “ these pretended Miracles: That the
 “ *Ruler’s* Daughter was only in a *Fit*,
 “ or rather *asleep*, as *Jesus* tells the Com-
 “ pany, and as his Charge to her Pa-
 “ rents, to conceal the Miracle, seems
 “ to imply ; that the Widow’s Son
 “ was in a *Lethargick* State, or rather,
 “ that his pretended Death was a con-
 “ certed thing between him, his Mo-
 “ ther, and *Jesus*, as his meeting the
 “ Corpse upon the Road, just at the
 “ nick of time, seems to denote ; and
 “ that *Lazarus* was in the like Contri-
 “ vance, both from *Jesus’s* weeping and
 “ groaning, and calling so loud at the
 “ Sepulchre, which looks like *acting a*
 “ *Part* ; and from the other’s coming
 “ out thence with a *Napkin bound about*
 “ *his*

“ *his Face*, which gives no small Suspicion of Fraud.

“ And indeed, had there not been some apparent Signs of Fraud and Fallacy in this Case, it is not conceivable, why the *Chief Priests* and *Pharisees* should be so far incensed against Jesus, for working so signal a Miracle, and against *Lazarus* too, for being the Subject of it, as to conspire together to take away their Lives. Upon the Supposition that the Miracle was true, no Instance in History can parallel this Barbarity. But it seems as if there were a Detection of Fraud on the *one* side, and a Consciousness of Guilt on the *other*, when we read that the chief Actor in it, *“ walked no more openly among the Jews, (for fear of Apprehension) but went thence into a Country, near the Wilderness (a convenient hiding-place) and there continued with his Disciples.”*

All Miracles, in the very Notion of them, are supernatural Effects or Productions ; and, however we may use the Terms *greater* or *less* with regard to common Operations, yet, when we come to apply them to Things, which

No one
Miracle
greater
than a-
nother.

Z transcend

transcend the reach of Nature, they are not so justifiable. In Effects, that are produced by human Power, we are apt to say indeed that some of them are *greater* than others; *i. e.* that they require more and greater Degrees of Power for the Production of them, and make a nearer approach to the utmost Boundaries of our Capacities: But this Distinction vanishes in our Consideration of the supreme Being, since his Power is not to be measur'd, like ours, by Degrees, nor limited to any certain Extent. The greatest Effect, we can imagine, gives no Limitation to his Omnipotence, but is, equally with the smallest, within the Compass of his Power. And therefore, since all the Miracles which our Saviour did, were the undoubted Effects of a divine Power, his raising any Person to Life again (if actually dead) tho' dead but for an Hour, is as great a Miracle, as if the Person had been dead twenty Years, since between *dead* and *dead* there can be no difference: and consequently, tho' we could not give a satisfactory Account why the *three first* Evangelists have made no mention of *Lazarus's* Resurrection, yet since *Lazarus's* Resurrection, is, in reality, no greater Miracle, than that of the *Ruler's* Daughter, or the *Widow's* Son, the matter

ter seems to be indifferent, and entirely left to his Choice, which of these three Miracles each Historian should think proper to record.

The *Evangelists*, no doubt, recorded the Miracles of Jesus Christ for the same Reason that he wrought them, namely, to shew that he was *a Prophet sent from God*; but so far were they from Vanity and Ostentation in what they wrote, so far from expatiating upon this copious Subject, that, after a Recital of some Particulars, we find them frequently mentioning the rest in a summary way. Thus ^b St. *Matthew*, having set down the miraculous Cures of a *Leper*, of the *Centurion's* Servant, and of *Peter's* Wife's Mother, relates no more, but only says in general; that, ^c *when the Even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with Devils, and he cast out the Spirits with his Word, and healed all that were sick*; and, in like manner, St. *Luke*, having related a Cure or two, one done in the Synagogue, and the other in a private House, concludes what he had more to say upon the Subject in this compendious manner; ^d *Now when the Sun was setting, all they, which had any sick with diverse Diseases, brought*

The *E-
vangelists
omit ma-
ny.*

Z 2

them

^b Chap. viii. ^c Ver. 16. ^d Chap. iv. 40.

them unto him, and he laid his Hands on every one of them, and healed them.

* Nay, such is the Modesty of the *Evangelists*, in regard to our Saviour's Miracles, that we have some reason to presume, they certainly knew of more Persons, by him restor'd to Life again, than they have particularly named: For, when *St. Matthew* relates his Answer to *John's* Disciples, who were sent to enquire concerning him, *'the Blind receive their Sight, the Lame walk, and the Dead are raised*; 'tis plain, that, by mentioning the *Dead* in the *plural* Number, he had the Knowledge of more than one, tho' he has given us a particular History of the *Ruler* of the Synagogue's Daughter only.

For what
Reasons
they do
it.

And indeed, considering the vast *Extent* of their Subject, and intended *Brevity* of their Books, in order to make them more useful to People of all Ranks and Capacities, it was absolutely necessary for them to omit several things, which must have occur'd to their Remembrance. The whole four Gospels, bound together, make not a large Volume, but each singly is a very small Book; and yet, besides the Miracles of our Saviour, attended, as they are, with the

* *Lardner's Vind. of three Miracles*, p. 7. *'Matth. xi. 5.*

the Circumstances of Place and Time, the Names of the Persons, and the Occasions of their being wrought; they have, in these short Pieces, inserted an Account of the wonderful manner of our Saviour's Birth, the Dangers of his Infancy, the miraculous Appearances of divine Providence in his Favour, and his Removals, and Journeyings from one Place and Country to another. They have recorded the Substance of his Doctrine in plain Terms; have set down many Parables spoken by him, together with his Explanations; and given us a full Account of the Mission of his twelve Apostles, and the other seventy Disciples. The Cavils and Questions of the *Pharisees*, *Sadducees*, and the *Herodians*, together with his Answers and Solutions, the Observations and Reflections of the People, his publick Discourses before all, and his private Instructions to his Disciples; his Predictions of his own Sufferings, of the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, and many other Events; a long and particular Account of his Persecution, Condemnation, and Crucifixion, as also of his Resurrection, and Ascension; not to mention the History of the Birth, Preaching, Baptism, and Sufferings of *John* the Baptist,

Baptist, his Forerunner, are all compriz'd in one short Volume: and therefore, having such plenty of Matter before them, they were oblig'd to be silent, as to some Matters, after they had related others of the like Nature, in order to reserve room for such important Events, as were essential parts of their History; lest they should proceed to such a length and prolixity, as they had determin'd to avoid. And hence it is easy to suppose, in behalf of the *three* former *Evangelists*, that when they came to a certain *Period* in their History of the Ministry of *Jesus*, and observ'd they had given a sufficient Account of his Doctrine and Miracles, being to reserve a Space for his last Sufferings, and Resurrection, they thought proper to pass over in Silence what ever happen'd between that Period, and the time of his last Journey to *Jerusalem*.

Why the
three first
omit that
relating
to *Laza-
rus*.

Now, whoever looks into [§] these *three Evangelists* with any due Attention, will find, that, from the time when our Saviour returned *into the Coasts of Judea beyond Jordan*, which (as ^h St. *John* tells us) was soon after *the Feast of the Dedication*, (and that was always observ'd in

§ Compare *Matth.* xix. ver. 1, 2. with ver. 17. and *Mark* x. ver. 1, with ver. 32.
^h *John* x. 22.

in *Winter*) to the time of his last going up to *Jerusalem*, a little before *Easter*, they make no mention at all of any Journeys or Movings from thence; and yet from this Country (according to St. *John's* Account) it was, that Jesus afterwards came up to *Bethany*, and raised *Lazarus*, and then ⁱ *went into the Country near the Wilderiness, into a City called Ephraim, and there continued with his Disciples.* And therefore, since these *Evangelists*, for the avoidance of Prolixity, thought not proper to take notice of what pass'd in this Interval of Time, they could not (with any Justice or Propriety) introduce into their Gospels an Account of the Resurrection of *Lazarus*.

But there is a farther Reason, which ^k some learned Men have given us, for their Silence in this respect. They tell us, that (according to an ancient Tradition) *Lazarus lived thirty Years after his being raised from the dead*, and that, the latest of these *Evangelists*, writing but fifteen Years after our Lord's Ascension, they might think it a needless matter, to mention a Miracle concerning a Person, living so near *Jerusalem*, when the Fame of it was so great, and so many Witnesses living to attest it: nor can

Z 4

they

ⁱ *John* xi. 54. ^k *Grotius* and *Whitby* on *John* xii.

they suppose, but that, in point of Prudence, the *Evangelists* declined mentioning this Story, for fear of exasperating the *Jews*, and giving their Rage and Malice a fresh Provocation to cut off *Lazarus*. However this be, 'tis not improbable (what the generality of Commentators tell us) that St. *John*, observing the Method of the former *Evangelists*, and in what Particulars they had made an Omission, might, at the Request of the *Asian* Bishops, undertake to supply their Defects.

This is no
Objection
on a-
gainst
St. *John*.

And indeed, whoever will give himself the trouble to compare his History with that of the other *Evangelists*, will find this Notion in a great measure verify'd. For, (not to mention any other Particulars of this sort) ¹ the Miracles of our Saviour, (recorded by St. *John*) antecedent to his Resurrection, are in all but eight. 1. His turning *Water* into *Wine* at the Marriage in *Cana of Galilee*. 2. His telling the *Samaritan* Woman the Secrets of her Life. 3. His healing the Nobleman's Son at *Capernaum*. 4. His curing the lame Man at the Pool of *Bethesda*. 5. His feeding five thousand Men with five Barley-Loaves and two Fishes. 6. His walking upon the Water, and calming a Storm at Sea. 7. His giving

¹ Defence of Script. Hist. p. 64.

giving Sight to the blind Man, by anointing his Eyes with Clay : And, 8, lastly, His raising *Lazarus* from the Dead : All which Miracles are omitted by the former Evangelists, except the 5th and 6th, and these two St. *John* seems to have recorded, chiefly to introduce a *moral* Discourse, which our Saviour took occasion to make to the People, and whereof the former *Evangelists* had taken no notice. And therefore the Silence of the former *Evangelists* is not a stronger Objection against the History of *Lazarus*, than it is against many other Facts, recorded by St. *John* ; or (to speak more properly) than it is against his whole Gospel. His Gospel indeed he wrote in an advanc'd Age, but, ^m according to the Account of some, not many Years after the death of *Lazarus*, at the most, when a whole Generation was alive, who must frequently have seen *Lazarus*, and been acquainted with the Story of his Resurrection, had it been *true*, and able to shame and confute the *Historian*, had it been *false*.

The Truth is, ⁿ all the *Evangelists* have omitted many things, which the others, one or more of them, have recorded ;

^m Vid. *Whitby* in *John* xi. ⁿ Defence of Scrip. Hist, p. 66.

corded ; even St. *John* himself ° confesses, that his own Gospel, though it supplied the Defects of the former *Evangelists* in many respects, left the History of *Jesus* still unfinish'd. It was submitted indeed to their own Judgment and Discretion, out of the infinite Variety of Miracles, which *Jesus* wrought, to choose, each of them, such, as seem'd to them the most material : And if, upon the whole, the good Providence of God has so order'd the matter, that there is enough recorded to lay the Foundation of a *reasonable* Faith, we ought to be contented, and not busy our selves in enquiring minutely, why this Miracle was recorded, or this Person made the Subject of it, rather than another ?

Why
Christ
raised
these Per-
sons more
especially.

† The Design of a Miracle is, not so much for the profit of him, on whom it is perform'd, or of his Friends and Relations, who are interested in his Welfare, as it is to attest the divine Mission of him, who works it, and to give Authority to the Message and Doctrine, which he delivers ; and, to this purpose, the raising a DAY-LABOURER is as conducive, as raising a PRINCE, and opening the Eyes of a *blind Beggar* by the Wayside, as curing a *powerful Magistrate*, or a *wealthy Merchant*.

Jarus

° *John* xx. 30.

† *Lardner's Vind.* p. 36.

Jarus however, whose Daughter was raised, was, both by Character and Office, a Person of Eminence among the *Jews*; and, considering the Perverseness and Obstinacy of many other Rulers of the Synagogue, this might be a Motive with Jesus to distinguish him by so divine a Favour. *Lazarus*, we know, was his peculiar Friend; and, as his Affection, no doubt, was deservedly placed on him, the same Reasons, that engag'd his Love, might prevail with him to express it in so wonderful a manner: And as to the Case of the Widow of *Nain's* Son, this the Scripture has set off in such moving Colours, as deserve a more particular Observation. ^a The parting with a beloved Child, is, at any time an Affliction, which, in tender Mothers, stirs a very sensible Concern; but when Time and Acquaintance have endear'd their Conversation, when we have not only enjoy'd the Diversions of their Childhood, but the Promises of their Youth, and begin to conceive just Hopes of their Attainments and Prosperity, this adds a considerable Weight to the Blow. But that, which *here* drove it deeper, is, that this *young Man was the only Son of his Mother*; no Remnant left behind to mitigate, or to supply the Loss;

^a *Stanhope's Epist. and Gosp. vol. 3.* ^b *Luke vii. 12.*

Loss ; no Remembrance of her Travail, but that most uncomfortable one of Fears and Pangs undergone to *encrease the Number of the Dead*. And yet the most melancholy Aggravation is still behind, that *she was a Widow* ; a State, of all others, the most *Friendless* and *Forlorn*, and, for this Reason, frequently mention'd in Scripture, as that, which God receives into his more immediate Protection. Such then, being the Condition of this mournful Woman, bereav'd of her Husband, bereav'd of her Son, in the Bloom and Vigour of Youth, when just at a Condition to repair a Mother's past Tenderness and Trouble, by becoming the Stay and Support of her Age and approaching Infirmities ; it is not at all to be wonder'd at, if this *Complication* of Misery mov'd Compassion in the merciful Jesus, to exert his divine Power, in order to turn her *Sorrow and Lamentation into Joy*.

Why we
have no
Account
of their
subsequent
Lives,

What became of these several Persons, after they were raised from the dead, we have indeed no Account transmitted to us ; but the Reason hereof is plain, ' because the *Evangelists*, writing the History of Christ only, had occasion to take notice of them so far as Christ was concern'd

concern'd with them, but were under no Obligation to enter into their particular Story. To prove the Miracles to be true, the *Evangelists* particularly relate the Circumstances of the Persons death, and particularly also the Circumstances of their being raised to Life again; and what more can be expected than this? If we had the minutest Account of their Affairs afterwards, the Miracle would stand just as it does, neither impair'd nor confirm'd by the History: But then, to expect that the Gospel, which was intended to instruct the World in Religion, should be fill'd with Mens private Adventures, or that the *Evangelists* should be oblig'd to write every Person's Life, on whom Christ wrought a Cure, is a thing highly absurd and unreasonable. If however, we may be allow'd to conjecture, ' it seems not improbable, from the speedy Progress of the Gospel, that many of these Persons, by modest and humble Acknowledgments of the Benefits they had receiv'd, by satisfying the *Inquisitive*, and convincing the *Doubtful*, might, according to their Stations, help forward the Work of the Apostles, and others engaged in spreading the Doctrine of Christ.

Whether

! *Lardner's Vind.* p. 30.

Nor any
Intelli-
gence from
them of
a *separate*
State.

Whether the *three*, whom our Saviour was pleased to raise, after their return to Life again, gave any Tidings concerning the Circumstances of their separate Existence, is what we cannot so much as conjecture, unless we had some Knowledge, whether their Souls might exist, and yet be under a *Suspension* of their Operations, at least without an Accession of any *new Ideas*, for as long a time, as they were out of the Body; or, if *new Ideas* were communicated in their *separate State*, whether they retain'd them after their *Re-union*, or were permitted to divulge them, or capable indeed of expressing them by the *common* Forms of Speech, which are only adapted to *material* and *sensible* things. † Our Saviour himself, who *was from above*, who was in the Bosom of the Father, and came to teach us all things necessary to Religion, has not thought fit to give us any distinct and particular Account of the other World. * St. Paul, who had *abundance of Revelations*, who was caught up into the *third Heaven*, and into *Paradise*, has not attempted any such thing; but declares only, that what he heard there, were *things unspeakable*, and *what it was not lawful for a Man to utter*. The Gospel, in the main,

† Lardner's Vind. p. 48. * 2 Cor. xii. 2, 7.

main, has made known unto us the Certainty of the Resurrection of the Just and Unjust, their final Judgment, and the different Awards of everlasting Punishment to the Wicked, and eternal Life to the Righteous. What they say of these Matters is great and awful, and sufficient to affect the Minds of all, that read and believe them; insomuch, that those, who will not be convinced by these general Declarations, *would not be persuaded, though one rose from the dead,* and told them never so many *Particulars* concerning the State of a separate Existence. Upon the whole therefore, we may be allow'd to say, that a *Silence* of these Particulars, instead of disparaging, tends to the Honour of the *Evangelists*; who, when they wrote the History of the Preaching and Miracles of Jesus, have not recorded Dreams, and Visions, and abstruse Theories of a future State, for the *Amusement* of Mankind, but certain and important Truths taught by him for their *Edification*.

Hitherto it appears that there is no *Incongruity* in the several *Stories*, as they are related by the *Evangelists*; and, that there can be no Suspicion of Fallacy in the *Miracles* themselves, is what we shall now endeavour to evince. ¶ That the
No Collu-
sion or
Fallacy in
these Mi-
racles.
several

several Persons, whom our Saviour raised to Life, were actually dead, or at least were all of them treated as dead Persons by their Friends and Relations, is evident and incontestible. For, when our Lord came to *Jarus's* House, he found the *Minstrels* there, and the People making great Lamentation; the Widow's Son was carrying to his Grave; and *Lazarus* had been actually buried several Days. But 'tis Nonsense to believe, that those about the *Ruler's* Daughter would have call'd in the *musical Instruments*,² as the manner of Funerals among the *Jews* was; or that the *Widow* would have suffer'd her only Son to be carried forth as a Corpse; or *Martha* and *Mary* their Brother to be so long buried; had there not been, in these several Cases, all the Evidence of Death that Reason and Sense could give.

The Case
of the
Widow's
Son.

'Tis confess'd indeed, that *common Fame affords Instances of the mistaken Deaths of Persons, who have sometimes been unfortunately buried alive, and at other times happily restored to Life*; and therefore, for Argument's sake, let us suppose for once, that this Widow's Son of *Nain*, might possibly be in a *Lethargick State*; yet since all about him concluded

² Vid. *Lewis's Antiq. of the Heb. Rep.* Vol. 3. p. 371.

cluded him to be dead, and accordingly were carrying him to his Funeral, how could *Jesus* (supposing him to be an *Impostor*) know, or so much as suspect, that he was only in a *Lethargy*; or if he suspected that, how could he tell farther at what precise time the Man would wake out of it? * What then are we to believe in this Case? Why, that *Jesus* needlessly offer'd himself to a publick Trial, without the least Prospect of Success. The Company met him *accidentally* upon the Road, but no-body asked or challenged him to raise this Man to Life. It was entirely his own offer; and thereupon he either did, or did not, suppose him to be dead. If he supposed him to be dead (as he had abundant Reason) he must needs know (upon the foot we are now arguing) that it was not in his Power to raise him. If he did not suppose him dead, but hop'd that there might be some Mistake in the Matter, the Hazard of being disappointed, in presuming upon a Case, which scarce happens once in a *Century*, added to this farther Hazard, that (even presuming this to be the Case) the Man might not possibly awake upon his *touching* the *Bier*, and calling upon him

A a to

* Defence of Script. Hist. p. 16.

to arise, makes the Chance against him to out-run all reckoning.

OF Fa-
rus's
Daugh-
ter.

The like is to be said in the Case of *Jarus's Daughter*. ^b Here a Person of Note requests of him to go and heal his Child, which was at the point of death: before he could get to the House, a Messenger comes and acquaints the Father, that she was actually dead. Upon this change in the Case, Jesus is so far from excusing himself, (as he had a fair Opportunity,) that he offers, of his own accord, to go forward, and tells the Father that he would raise her; ^c *Be not afraid, says he, only believe, and she shall be made whole.* Whatever the Case of the Child was in reality, 'tis certain, both by the Message of the Servant, and the Appearance of Things, when he came to the House, that Jesus had all the reason in the World to believe her dead. Here then is an Impostor making a bold and desperate *Push*, which must either ruin him at once, or establish his Reputation for ever. He undertakes to raise a Person to Life, who, he was assur'd, was dead. If she was dead in good earnest, he was undone; his only Hopes rested upon a bare Possibility, that there might be some Mistake in the Case: Upon these Hopes he goes, and when

^a Defence of Script. Hist. p. 17. ^c Luke viii. 50.

when he comes to the House, *luckily* finds that there was a Mistake, and more luckily still, that himself was the only one that perceived it. What now does he do? why, instead of improving this extraordinary Accident to his own Advantage, he takes away (as much as in him lies) all possible Pretence for a Miracle, by declaring plainly, that the Person was not really dead, as they supposed, but *asleep*, and wanted only to be awaken'd. Here certainly is such a Bundle of Absurdities, as no Man of common Sense can ever be supposed to incur. Had Jesus been an *Impostor*, or had the History, we are now examining, been a *Forgery*, instead of these modest Expressions, *give place, for the Maid is not dead, but sleepeth*, we had had some such vaunting Speech as this; "Ay! the young
" Woman is really dead, and your La-
" mentations are well grounded; but
" let me only look upon her, and say
" a few Words over her, and depend
" upon it, you will see her alive again,
" and as well as ever." Whereas our Saviour, in what he says, is so far from boasting of his divine Power, that he seems rather desirous to conceal it; and, for that reason, makes use of a Word of a softer Signification, (as he does else-

where^d in the Case of *Lazarus*) to denote that Death, which he came to remove, with the same Facility, as another Person might be *awaken'd out of sleep*.

Why
Christen-
join'd her
Parents
Silence.

And indeed 'twas owing, in a great measure, to the Humility and Modesty of Jesus, that, instead of ordering Men to proclaim his Works, we find him so frequently desiring them to conceal them. In the present Case however, he might have some Regard to the Character of *Jarus*, as Ruler of the Synagogue, and, by this Advice of Silence, dispense with his speaking publickly of a Miracle, which might possibly draw the Malice of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* upon him, as well as upon himself. In the Case of his raising *Lazarus*, we find, that *because, by reason of him, many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus, the Chief Priests consulted, not only how to destroy Jesus, but to put Lazarus likewise to death*; and much of the same Design might have been expected (which our Saviour by this kind Caution endeavour'd to prevent) if it once came to their Knowledge, that so great a Man, as a Governor of the Synagogue, by the miraculous Recovery of his Daughter, had forsaken the Religion of his Ancestors,

* *John xi. 4, &c.*

* *John xii. 10, 11.*

stors, and was become a Convert to the Christian Faith. But to proceed.

When *Lazarus* fell sick, ^f the *Evan-* The Case
gelist informs us, that Jesus was not with of Laza-
him, nor did he see any of the Family, ^{thus.}
until he had been buried some Days;
that when *Martha* and *Mary* met him,
their Behaviour was such, as might na-
turally be expected from Persons under
the most sensible Concern for the Loss
of so near a Friend; that when he saw
their Sorrow and Concern, and the Peo-
ple, that came to comfort them, la-
menting their Loss with Tears, himself
was likewise moved with Compassion,
and *Wept*; that when he came to the
Grave (*it was a Cave, and a Stone laid
upon it*) and order'd the Stone to be
taken away, *Martha* interposed, as
knowing her Brother to have been too
long dead, to be fit to be seen; but that,
after a short Prayer to God, he called
upon *Lazarus* with a loud Voice, where-
upon *he, that was dead, came forth,*
bound hand and foot with Grave-Cloths,
and his Face was bound about with a Nap-
kin. In this Light have the *Evangelists*
represented the whole Transaction, and
wherein I pray is the least Shadow of
Fraud or Collusion?

A a 3

If

^f *John xi.*

Why
Christ
wept, and
called
him with
a loud
Voice.

If our Saviour's compassionating the Circumstances of his Friends, and weeping upon so sad an Occasion, should be accounted an Action not comporting with his Character, it should be consider'd, & that " There is something in
" human Nature, resulting from our
" very Make and Constitution, while it
" retains its genuine Form, and is not
" alter'd by vicious Habits, or oppress'd
" by Stupidity, which renders us ob-
" noxious to the Pains of others ; causes
" us to *sympathize* with them, and al-
" most comprehends us in their Case.
" This Compassion appears eminently in
" those, who, upon other Accounts, are
" justly reckon'd among *the best of Men*.
" They, who, of all Writers, undertake
" to imitate Nature most, often intro-
" duce even their *Heroes* weeping. The
" Tears of Men are, in truth, very dif-
" ferent from the Cries and Ejaculations
" of Children : They are silent Streams,
" and flow from other Causes, common-
" ly some *tender*, and perhaps *philo-*
" *sophical* Reflections : " And in the Case
now before us, there might be other
Considerations, besides the Loss of *Lazarus*,
that might draw from our Saviour
these Tears of Compassion. He might,
at that time be affected with the Thought
of

of many Afflictions, to which human Nature is liable, in this imperfect State, and his Groans and inward Grief might proceed from the want of Faith, observable in the Sisters, and Company attending, and a Diffidence of his Ability to raise the Dead, notwithstanding they had seen so frequent Manifestations of a divine and omnipotent Power residing in him.

^bHe knew that the Obstinacy and invincible Prejudices of some of the Spectators, and of the generality of the *Jewish* People was such, that the astonishing Miracle, he was going to work, would not have its due Effect upon them. This recall'd to his Mind that Scene of Misery and Desolation, which he foresaw would overtake them, and therefore he griev'd and *sigh'd deeply* at the prospect of the Calamities, which that perverse People were bringing upon themselves, and, which all his Endeavours, his Miracles and Sufferings, could not prevent. So that, upon the whole, the Concern which our Lord express'd upon this Occasion, proceeded from the noblest Motives, Wisdom, Goodness, Friendship, Compassion, and every View, that is just and laudable, while he sympathiz'd with his Friends, and griev'd for his Enemies.

A a 4

If

^b *Stevenson's* Conference upon the Miracles. p. 4.

If his *crying to Lazarus with a loud Voice* is thought a Circumstance of some Suspicion, it should be remember'd, that, when a Miracle is wrought for the Proof of the Character, or divine Mission of any Person, it ought always to appear to be done by him, that it may not be reputed a *casual* Event. ⁱ For this Reason it is, that we find the Prophets, and other extraordinary Messengers of God, at the same time that they performed any Miracle, always making use of some external Action, though that Action was in itself of no real Virtue. Thus when the *Red-Sea* was to be open'd to give a Passage to the Children of *Israel*, God said unto *Moses*, ^k *Lift up thy Rod, and stretch thine Hand over the Sea, and divide it.* The *stretching the Hand*, it is plain, did not divide the Sea, but the divine Power, that accompanied that Action; and yet that Action was of great use to convince the People, that the dividing and returning of the Waters (which immediately follow'd thereupon) was not a casual natural Event, but a plain Indication of God's abetting the Pretensions of their Leader *Moses*. And, in like manner, the Tone of our Saviour's Voice, whether *low*, or *loud*, availed nothing to the dead Man's Resurrection,

ⁱ Lardner's Vind. p. 65.

^k *Exod.* xiv. 16.

rection, but since the History assures us that a great Number of *Jews*, and, among these, Foes as well as Friends, were come to condole with the two Sisters upon this sorrowful Event, common Reason will inform us, that it was highly proper, that all, who were present, should be equally Witnesses of the whole Process; and, consequently, that an elevated Voice was more suitable to this Occasion, than when the like Miracle was done, either in a private Room, or before a smaller Number of People.

If the *Napkin*, which *Lazarus* came out of the Grave with, is thought to give any suspicious Umbrage, it may not be improper to observe, that the Text says, that ¹ *Lazarus's Face was bound about with a Napkin*; but it does not say, that it was cover'd with it, so that the Spectators could not behold his Countenance. The same *Evangelist*, speaking of our Lord's Resurrection, uses the same Expression, and tells us of the *σудάριον*, ὃ ἦν ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς αὐτοῦ, the *Napkin*, that was upon his Head, by which it would seem that the *Sudarium* was part of the *Burial-dress*, bound about the Head, and covering only the upper-part of the Face or Forehead, like a *Night-Cap*; and

The *Napkin* on his Forehead no suspicious Circumstance.

and if so, this Circumstance can be no Proof that his Face was not open to the view of the Company. But allowing that his whole Face was covered with this *Napkin*, yet, since, among all civiliz'd Nations, the Custom is reputed decent, to cover the Face of the Corpse with something or other, as this was a Proof that *Lazarus* was supposed by his Friends to be dead, when they buried him; so, instead of any Bodies going into the Tomb to occasion the least Suspicion of any clandestine Practices, the proper Demonstration was to see him come forth fairly alive, in the presence of the numerous Spectators, without any Change or Alteration of his Funeral Habit, but what was made before the People themselves, by our Saviour's saying, *loose him, and let him go*. That some or other in the Company was ready enough, upon this Occasion, to obey our Lord's Command, can hardly be doubted; and therefore it is very wonderful, that (had there been any Fraud or Collusion in this Resurrection) among so great a Multitude, no one should have Sagacity enough to find it out. But the Truth of the Matter is, ⁿ they none of them suspected any such thing; they none of them thought, that, when a Man had been

* Defence of Script. Hist. p. 28.

been four Days buried, there wanted any Proof of his being dead; they none of them thought that Christ was only a pretended worker of Miracles, for, how unwilling soever they were to own him for their *Messias*, by long Experience they were convinc'd, that he was a Person *mighty in Word and Deed.*

Some few of the Company (as the History tells us) who were not convinc'd, even by this Miracle, went to the *Chief Priests* and *Pharisees*; but what was it that they told them? "That they had detected Jesus in an Imposture, and found out how the whole Business of this pretended Resurrection was transacted?" Quite otherwise, as appears from what themselves said, when, in Consequence of this Information, they were assembled in Council, *What do we do, for this Man doth many Miracles; if we let him thus alone, all Men will believe on him, and the Romans shall come and take away both our Place and Nation, and thereupon they resolve that both he and Lazarus should be put to death.*

The Romans shall come, and take away our Place and Nation, was the publick and specious Reason given for the sanguinary Measures taken against our Saviour, but it was far from being the true one.

Why the Jews were so enrag'd against Jesus.

one. The *Jews*, indeed, were very impatient of the *Roman* Yoke, and, upon all Occasions, prone enough to Rebellion: But, so far was our Saviour, either by Example or Precept, from giving any Disturbance to the Civil Government; so far from affecting any secular Dominion among them; that we find him very frequently strictly charging the very People, that he cur'd, not to divulge the Miracles he had wrought, [¶] on purpose to discourage the pernicious Conceit, which had then obtain'd among the *Jews*, that their *Messiah* was to be a temporal Prince. Here then was the true Cause, that rais'd their Malice and Indignation against him, *viz.* a Defeat given to their Expectations, in a Doctrine abhorrent to their corrupt Notions. For it was a sad Disappointment and Mortification to them, after the fond Conceits, they had so long cherish'd, of a *temporal* Deliverer in the Person of the expected *Messiah*, to be put off with one, who made so little Figure in the World himself, and who, instead of raising his Followers to any Eminence of earthly Honour and Dignities, made it his Business to beget in their Minds a just Contempt of the World, and all the fading

¶ Vid. *Whitby* in *Matth.* ix. 30.

fading and perishable Glories of it. And whoever considers the prodigious Force of worldly Interest upon the greatest part of Mankind; how much they are under the Influence and Impression of temporal Motives; and what Regret and Impatience they discover, when they meet with any thing, that controuls their ungovernable Lusts and Passions; will not wonder, that a Doctrine of so much Purity and Simplicity, as our Saviour came to establish, should meet with so much Opposition from such a corrupt Generation of Men, as the *Jewish* Rulers were. Had he indeed taught no Doctrine at all, or no Doctrine contrary to the Opinions commonly receiv'd, his healing the Sick, and raising the Dead to Life, would questionless have every where gain'd him a great Esteem, and a general Consent, that the Power, by which he was enabled to do such Miracles, was *Divine*: But when the Case was so, that they could not acknowledge the Hand of God in these Things, without acknowledging, at the same time, the Truth of a Doctrine, to which they had an irreconcilable Aversion; it is easy enough to conceive, how this might have the Effect which we find it had, of blinding their Eyes against Conviction, and
of

of putting them upon contriving the Destruction, both of *Jesus* himself, and of every one else, who was instrumental in supporting his Authority among the People.

Why he
retir'd
from
their
Malice.

And if such was the Rage and Malignity of the *Jewish* Rulers against him, who can think it strange, that an innocent Person should endeavour to take care of his own Life and Safety, and prudently avoid (as much as was consistent with Justice and Honour) the bloody Designs of wicked and outrageous Men. ' A time there was indeed (and *that* near approaching) appointed in the Decrees of God, when he was to be offer'd up on the Cross for the Sins of the World; but till that time was fully accomplish'd, he was to be preserv'd, not by any *miraculous* Interposition, but by the ordinary Methods of Providence. Had he summon'd his *Legions* from Heaven, and overthrown his Enemies by a visible Exercise of his sovereign Power, ' *How then* (as he himself observes) *should the Scriptures have been fulfilled, that thus it should be?* And since, for this Reason, it was improper for him to employ his miraculous Power for his Protection, what had he to do, but to decline, for the present, the Storm that was gathering,

' Defence of Script. Hist. p. 40. ' *John* xii. 1, 10.

ing, by retiring into a Place more private than *Jerusalem*. In this Retirement, however, his continuance was not long; for the next News we hear of him was at *Bethany*, in the House of *Lazarus*, where he was entertain'd at Supper publickly, in the Presence of a great Number of the *Jews*, who came, not only for *Jesus's* sake, but that they might see *Lazarus* also, whom he had raised from the dead.

Bethany was a Village ^w about two Miles distant from *Jerusalem*, where, ^x within six Days the Passover was to be celebrated. Here our Saviour (whose Design was to be at the *Feast*) took up his Quarters, and, during this short interval, went every Day to *Jerusalem*, where he appear'd in the most publick and frequented Places. The first time of his going thither, ^y he was met, upon the way, by great Throngs of People, who, with loud Acclamations, and other publick Marks of Honour, usher'd him into the City. After this we find him in the Temple, ^z driving out the *Buyers* and *Sellers*, disputing with the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, rebuking them sharply with his Parables, and exposing them openly in his Discourses to the People.

No Fraud
in this
Miracle
from his
After-Acti-
ons.

Now

^w *John* xi. 18.

^x *Ibid.* xii. 1.

^y *Ver.* 12.

^z *Matth.* xxi. 12.

Now had our Saviour been conscious of any Fraud in the Case of *Lazarus*, how can we think, that he would have come to *Bethany* again, and into the House of the very Man, who was the *principal Actor* in the Cheat; that he would have gone to *Jerusalem*, into the very Teeth of his Enemies; been receiv'd, by the *Populace*, with such Marks of Distinction, or allow'd to treat the great and leading Men of the City with such Freedom of Speech? Above all, how can we think, that, in the Course of this Freedom, or in the Course of his *Trial*, no one should be found to upbraid him with what had passed at *Bethany*, which (considering the great Weight of the Objection, supposing it to have been a *Fraud*, the short time that had pass'd since the thing was done, and that several were to be found, who must have been Eye-witnesses of it) would have avail'd more to disgrace him with the People, than all the little Artifices they used to entangle him in his *Talk*; and have justify'd his Condemnation better, than the false Accusations, which seditious Witnesses alledg'd, of his having a Design to pull down the Temple, and destroy the Law? These things, I say, can no ways be accounted for, without admitting in our Saviour a *Consciousness* of his own *Innocency* of
any

any just Imputation of Fraud, and on the part of the People, a general Persuasion that he wrought his Miracles by the Power of God.

And now to look back upon what has been said in Vindication of these three Resurrection-Miracles. Since the Distinction of *greater* and *less* Miracles is destitute of all real Foundation, and, consequently, the raising of one Person from the Dead, is as much a Miracle as raising another; since the *Evangelists*, in their Accounts of our Saviour's Miracles, are so far from relating every one, that they omit *several*, which the intended Brevity of their Gospels, and the multiplicity of Matter necessary to be compriz'd in them, oblig'd them to do; since, upon these Considerations, and perhaps in point of *Prudence*, that they might not exasperate the *Jews* against *Lazarus*, the *three first Evangelists* have pass'd by that *Period* in our Saviour's Life, wherein *Lazarus* was raised from the dead, and contented themselves with relating the History of others so raised; since the Gospel of *St. John* was professedly written to supply the Defects of these other *Evangelists*, and accordingly has done it in many remarkable Instances; since the three Persons; whose Resurrections are recorded by these sa-

The *Sum*
of the
whole
Answer.

cred Pen-men, were no improper Objects of our Saviour's Kindness to them, and the Scripture's Silence concerning their future Lives, and the Intelligence from the other World, may, in a great measure, be accounted for; since there could be no Mistake in their Deaths, nor any Circumstances in the whole Story, denoting a *Fallacy* in their Resurrection; since, in the Case of *Lazarus* particularly, the whole Process was so order'd, as to take away all imaginable occasion of Suspicion, and the bloody Resolves of the *Jewish* Couccil thereupon, and our Saviour's *Retreat* from *Jerusalem* for his Security, were no more, than what, an inveterate *Prejudice* in them, and a Principle of *Self-Preservation* in him, may be well supposed to suggest; since all these Articles, I say, have been proved to be thus, the *Evangelists* are acquitted from the Imputation of *Forgery*; their Histories from the Charge of *intrinsick Absurdities and Incredibilities*; and our Saviour's Conduct, in working these Miracles, from the *railing Accusation* of *Fraud* and *Imposture*: and so we are come, at last, to *his own Resurrection*.



S E C T. XXII.

Of CHRIST's *own* Resurrection.

“ **B**UT his own Resurrection, as ^{The Ob-}
“ the *Evangelists* have related it, ^{jection.}
“ is the most notorious and monstrous
“ Imposture, that was ever put upon
“ Mankind. Pity it is indeed, that we
“ have not the Books, which were an-
“ ciently written against *Jesus* and his
“ Actions, for they, doubtless, would
“ have given us an Insight into the whole
“ Contrivance. However, this Com-
“ fort we have, that the very Account,
“ which is given by the pretended Wit-
“ nesses of this Fact, is enough to de-
“ stroy the Credit of it. * To this pur-
“ pose we must remember, that, after
“ *Jesus* was crucify'd, and his dead
“ Body laid in the Sepulchre, the Go-
“ vernors of the *Jews*, calling to mind,
“ that he, in his Life-time, had pro-
“ mised to rise again the third Day, and,
“ considering withal, that he had many
“ Disciples and Followers alive, who
“ would be ready enough to combine

B b 2

“ in

* Bp. *Sherlock's* Trial of the Witnesses.

“ in any Fraud to verify their Master’s
 “ Prediction, address’d themselves to
 “ *Pilate*, the *Roman* Governour, and of
 “ him obtain’d a Guard to watch the
 “ Place : nay, and to prevent any fu-
 “ ture Fraud, the Chief-Priests took a
 “ farther Method, and seal’d the Door
 “ of the Sepulchre, upon Agreement
 “ with the Apostles, that the Seals should
 “ not be open’d, till the time appointed
 “ for the Resurrection, in order that all
 “ Parties might see, and be satisfy’d,
 “ whether the dead Body was come to
 “ Life or no. This was a fair expedient,
 “ one would think, to determine the
 “ Dispute ; but, instead of this, we find
 “ the Seals broken, without the Consent
 “ or Privy of the *Chief-Priests*, and the
 “ Body stolen away by his Disciples, a
 “ *whole Day*, before he himself had
 “ spoke of his Resurrection, and early
 “ in the Morning, when the *Guards*
 “ were fast asleep, as they themselves
 “ acknowledg’d.

“ And indeed, had there not been
 “ some such Management as this in the
 “ Case, we can hardly conceive, why
 “ *Jesus*, after his suppos’d Resurrection,
 “ did not appear *personally* to the Chief-
 “ Priests and Rulers of the *Jews*. Him
 “ they had crucify’d and put to death,

“ as a Deceiver and false Prophet ; to
 “ them did his Commission in a more es-
 “ pecial manner relate, and therefore,
 “ for his own Justification, as well as
 “ their Conviction, it was in a manner
 “ necessary for him to manifest his Re-
 “ surrection. For, since his Resurrecti-
 “ on is acknowledg’d to be the chief
 “ Proof of his Mission, the Evidence of
 “ it should certainly have been so or-
 “ der’d, as to put it beyond all possibi-
 “ lity of Exception : But, instead of this,
 “ we have none, but a Set of his own
 “ Creatures, who call themselves *Wit-*
 “ *nesses chosen before of God*, to attest a
 “ Matter of such Consequence. ’Tis
 “ acknowledg’d indeed, that in Testi-
 “ mony of these *Fictions*, they persist-
 “ ed with great Constancy and Resolu-
 “ tion ; but, as it is no uncommon
 “ thing to meet with *Enthusiasts*, who
 “ will suffer to the uttermost in vindi-
 “ cation of Falshoods, and sometimes to
 “ meet with harden’d *Villains*, who will
 “ even adventure to die in an obstinate
 “ denial of the Truth ; we may, from
 “ the whole, conclude, that these pre-
 “ tended Witnesses of *Jesus’s* Resur-
 “ rection, were either *silly* enough to
 “ be impos’d on themselves in what
 “ they attested, or, for some private

“ Views or other, *wicked* enough to endeavour to impose upon others.”

The Loss
of *Anti-
christian
Books* no
great Dis-
service to
the *Infidel*
Cause.

^b The Resurrection of our Saviour Christ is the great Point, upon which the whole weight of *Christianity* rests; and therefore, as our Faith can never be too well grounded herein, whatever Objections have, in any Age, been advanced against it, are not unworthy our Consideration. 'Tis much to be wished therefore, that the ^c *Antichristian* Books, whose loss is so much lamented, were extant at this Day, if it were but to stop the Mouths of their Admirers, who would not, I am confident, boast so much of them, if they had them, as they now do, that they want them. Whatever the strength of Wit or Malice can do, our modern *Patrons* of Infidelity have not left unattempted; and 'twould be a Disparagement to their fine Parts, and compass of Thinking, to imagine, that any of the *Ancients* could assist them in their Enquiries. If we may be allow'd to take the Character of *Porphyry* (one of the most strenuous opposers of *Christianity*, whose Books *Theodosius* the Emperor order'd to be burnt) from *Eusebius*, who had seen and read them, we cannot but

^b Dr. Pearce's Vind. Part I. p. 1. : Defence of Script. Hist. p. 50.

but suppose, that, if his manner was,
^d *when he wanted Reasons, to set himself*
to railing, and tho' he would sometimes
speak Truth, when he could not help it,
yet he never scrupled to tell a Lye, when
he thought he could palm it upon his Rea-
ders, without being discovered, his Books
 could have been of any great service in
 our search after Truth. Nay, supposing
 that he, and some other *Fathers of Infir-*
delity, had made never so many Disco-
 veries against Christianity, and, with
 the like Assurance, that some of their
 Sons have done, had affirm'd that *Jesus*
 was a vile *Impostor,* and the History of
 his Miracles, (especially of his Resur-
 rection,) as it is recorded by the *Evan-*
gelists, was all a mere Fable, yet, after
 all, the Question will be, whom we are
 to believe? ^e That they, or any Autho-
 rities, they could bring to vouch for them,
 could have better Opportunities of know-
 ing the Truth, than the *Evangelists* had,
 is absolutely impossible; and that any
 of them have given any such Proofs of
 their Honesty and Sincerity, as the *E-*
vangelists did, a Man must be void of
 the Sense of Shame to maintain: And
 this (by the way) may supply us with
 a Reason, why the Fate of their Writ-
 ings,

B b 4

^d Ecclef. Hist. L. 6. C. 18. ^e Defence of Script.
 Hist. p. 51, 52.

ings, and of the *Evangelists* was so very different.

Why it
happen'd.

That the *Heathens*, when under the Power of *Christians*, were as able to preserve their Books from being destroy'd, as the *Christians*, when under the Power of *Heathens*, were to preserve theirs, can be no manner of doubt, if mere Power were to be consider'd: but the great Difference lay here, that the Books of the *New Testament* were so confirm'd and establish'd by undoubted Evidence, and Christians were so fully convinced of their divine Authority, that they willingly sacrificed their Lives, rather than deliver them up; and by this means they were preserv'd and out-liv'd the Rage of *ten* Persecutions: whereas the Writings of *Celsus* and *Porphyrus*, &c. were senseless lying *Invectives*, which however Men of corrupt Fancies might be pleas'd with, yet no one was found to have that value for them, as to run the least Hazard for their Preservation, and therefore they easily fell under the Punishment, which many thought due to the Spite and Malice, which gave them birth.

The Cir-
cumstan-
ces preced-
ing Christ's
Resurrec-
tion.

Since then we are reduced to the sole Account of the *Evangelists*, in this great Article of our Christian Faith, 'tis happy for us, that every Circumstance, relating

ting to it, is so minutely told, as to leave no Umbrage for Suspicion. For, upon his being taken down from the Cross, and prepar'd for Interment, the sacred Historians inform us, that he was laid *in a new Tomb*; that this Tomb was *hew'd out of a Rock*; that a great Stone was rolled to the Door of it, that Stone secured with a Seal, and the whole watch'd and defended with a strong Guard of Soldiers. The Tomb is said to be a *new one, wherein never Man before was laid*, to prevent all Suspicion of its being any other Body, that did arise; and to be *hewn out of a Rock*, closed with a Stone, and watch'd with a Guard, to silence the Pretence of the *Jews* that his Disciples stole the Body away: But, that the *sealing the Door* was intended for any *Contract* or Agreement between the Chief Priests and his Apostles is a mere Fiction, and full of Absurdities; because whoever considers the Situation of Affairs at that Time must needs imagine, that there could be no manner of Intercourse between them.

† When Christ was first seiz'd, and carried to his Trial, his Disciples fled, and hid themselves for fear of the *Jews*, out of a just suspicion, that they should, if apprehended, be sacrificed
No Engagement between the Chief Priests and his Apostles,
with

[*Bp. Sherlock's Trial of the Witnesses*, p. 40.

with their Master. *St. Peter* indeed followed him to the *Judgment-Hall*, but his Courage soon failed him, and 'tis well known in what a shameful manner he denied him. After the Death of Christ, his Disciples were so far from being ready to engage for his Resurrection, or to enter into any Terms or Agreements for the *manner*, in which it should be done, that they themselves did not believe it ever would come to pass; they gave off, in short, all Thoughts and Expectations of it, and instead of entering into any Covenant with the Chief Priests, made it their whole Care and Concern, to keep themselves close and concealed from them.

The Reason of
sealing
the Sepulchre.

So that, it was not upon any Stipulation with the Apostles, (who all this while never once came near them,) but to secure themselves against any Deception of the Guards, and lest they should enter into a Combination against them, that the *Jews* sealed the Door of the Sepulchre. Such was the Precaution taken by the *Jewish* Rulers: But what avails all this against the mighty Power of God? *¶ An Angel descends, and rolls away the Stone; his Countenance and the Earthquake, that attended him, frighten the Keepers so, that they became like dead*

dead Men: But, when *trembling for fear*, they came into the City, and told what was done, observe, what a contradictory Story the Rulers trump up.

They pretended, "That, notwithstanding all they had done, the Disciples stole away the Body; that things were carried on just in the same manner, as if no Precaution had been used, nor any Guards at all placed; that all their Contrivance and Fore-sight had been out-witted by a Parcel of silly Fishermen, who had the Hardiness to break the Seal, and were able, without Discovery, to roll away a vast Stone, and withal to carry off the dead Body; that, while this was doing, the whole Number of the Guards were, to a Man, fast asleep, and (which is as strange as all the rest) that though they were *so*, they knew every thing that passed, without any Attempt, or Inclination to prevent it; and were able to give as exact a Relation of what happen'd, while they were asleep, as if they had been broad awake." *O ye wicked and corrupt Wretches*, (as *St. Austin*, with just Indignation, expostulates the Case with the Soldiers,) *either ye were awake, or asleep; if awake, it was your*
Business

The Absurdity of their stealing away the Body.

Business to secure the Body from being stolen away; if asleep, then your own Words disprove you, since, in this Condition, it was impossible for you to know, either what was done, or who were the Persons that did it. And indeed, well may the Guards be ask'd, how they came to be so punctual in relating what happen'd when they were asleep, and what induced them to believe, that the Body was stolen at all; what, that it was stolen by the Disciples; when according to their own Confession, they could see nothing that pass'd.

From
their
want of
Courage.

ⁱ That the *Romans*, whose *Military* Discipline was so extremely strict, should neglect their Post upon so extraordinary an Emergency, is hardly allowable; but, supposing they did, how can we imagine, that the Disciples should ever engage in so desperate a Design, as stealing away their Master's Body? For are not these the very Men, who, upon the first Assault in the Garden, all forsook him? They durst not stand by him even then, when he declar'd it in his Power to *call for twelve Legions of Angels* for his Rescue; and have they now the Confidence to come in a Body, and bear away his Corpse? It is incongruous to believe, that they, who durst not so much

ⁱ *Stanhope's Epist. and Gosp. vol. 2. p. 592.*

much as appear in publick, but assembled privately, and shut up their Doors *for fear of the Jews*, should invade a strong Guard, and, all on a sudden grow so valiant, or rather *fool-hardy*, as to attempt a Detachment of armed Men (whose Order and Business it was to expect, and be provided for them) when he, in whom they trusted, was dead, and when the stoutest of them all (even while he was yet alive) trembled at the Voice of a silly Servant-wench, and was forced to have recourse to Falshood and Perjury, to deliver himself from the Danger of her inquisitive Tongue.

But let us suppose further, that the Disciples had Courage enough for so desperate an Undertaking; yet what Hopes could they have of succeeding in it? ^k A dead Body is not remov'd by *Slight of Hand*, it requires many Hands to do it; and the Stone, at the Mouth of the Sepulchre, was to be taken away, which could not be done *silently*, and by Men walking on Tip-toes to prevent Discovery. So that if the Guards had really been asleep, yet there was no Encouragement to go upon the Enterprize for 'tis hardly possible to suppose, but that rolling away the Stone, moving the Body, and the Hurry and Confusion of

The Impracticableness of the thing.

^k *The Trial of the Witnesses, p. 43.*

of carrying it off, must have awaken'd them.

And the
Folly of it.

¹ But supposing the thing practicable, yet the Attempt was such, as the Disciples, *consistently with their own Notions*, could not undertake. They had promised themselves, in their Master's Lifetime, to see him become a Temporal Prince; and to *sit on his Right and on his Left-hand* had been the Matter of some of their Petitions: But now, that they had seen him dead, and laid in the Grave, they gave up all for lost, and, what the sorrowful Disciple, in his Way to *Emmaus*, says, was the general Sentiment of them all, ^m *We trusted that it had been he, which should have deliver'd Israel.* And if such was their Despondency, for what End or Reason should they attempt to steal away his Body? Did they expect to make a King of the dead Body, if they could but get it into their Power? Or ⁿ did they think, that, if they had it, they could raise it to Life again? If they trusted so far to their Master's Prediction, as to expect his Resurrection (which I think is evident they did not) yet it is too gross to suppose, that they were so far bereav'd of common Sense, as to fancy that his Resur-

¹ *Stanhope's Epist. and Gosp. vol. 2. p. 600.*

^m *Luke xxiv. 21.* ⁿ *The Trial of the Witnesses, p. 44.*

Resurrection depended upon having the dead Body in their Possession. And yet some such extravagant Supposition, as this, must be admitted, before we can conceive, why they ran such a visible Hazard for that, which, when obtain'd, could avail them nothing.

But admitting that the Disciples were both bold enough, and foolish enough to attempt the thing; yet the Circumstances, wherein the Sepulchre was left, are a sufficient Proof, that the Removal of the Body was none of their Handy-work. Robberies, we know, are committed in haste, and every Moment is tedious to Men under Apprehensions of Discovery. If therefore the removing of the Body had been their Work, and they had watch'd their Opportunity for it, when the Centinels were asleep; yet certainly they would have taken it away, as it was, without staying to unbind and undress it. For do Thieves, after they have rifled an House, use to spend time in putting things in order again? And is it not agreeable to all the Reason in the World, that these Persons would have been rather sollicitous to make their Escape, than to strip the Corpse °, to fold up the Clothes, and to lay them apart from one another, in
their

From the Condition, in which the Sepulchre was found.

their proper Places? The Custom of Int^{er}ment among the *Jews*, we know, was to roll the dead Body ^P (as we read our Saviour's was) up in Spices, which, though they preserved it in some measure from Corruption, yet, by their glewy Nature, could not but make the Clothes, that were used with them, cling so close to the Skin, as not to be drawn off without a great deal of Time and Difficulty. When therefore these Coverings were found, regularly pull'd off, wrapped up, and laid by, this plainly shews, that the removing of Jesus's Body was a work of Leisure and Deliberation, and such, as, by no means, agrees with the Confusion and Haste of Things done by Stealth: nor can it enter into any sober Man's Thoughts, that they, who came privily, and in Danger of their Lives, should thus venture the awakening of the Guard, and trifle away their time in such hazardous and unnecessary Niceties.

These, and many more Circumstances of the like Nature, are Conviction enough, that the Disciples were not concerned in stealing away their Master's Body. And, if we pursue their History a little farther, we shall find, that even the Persons, who first accused them with it, did,

^P *John* xix. 39, 40.

did, in their future Conduct, discover, that they themselves were conscious the Story was false.

¶ Not long after our Saviour's Resur-
rection, we read, that the Disciples, ha-
ving received new *Power from above*,
appeared publickly in *Jerusalem*, nay, in
the very Temple, and testified the Re-
surrection of Christ, even before those,
that had murder'd him. But what did
the *Chief Priests* do upon this Occasion?
They seize upon the Apostles, they
threaten them, they beat them, they
scourge them, and all to stop their
Mouths, insisting that they should say
no more of the Matter. But why did
they not, when they had them in their
Power, charge them directly with their
notorious Cheat, in stealing their Ma-
ster's Body, and so expose them to the
People, as Impostors? This had been
to their Purpose more, and had more
effectually undeceiv'd the People, than
all their Menaces and Ill-usage; but not
one Word of this is said. They try to
murder them, enter into Combinations
to assassinate them, prevail with *Herod*
to put one of them to death, but not so
much as a Charge against them of any
Fraud in the Resurrection. ¶ Their Ora-
tor *Tertullus*, who could not have mis'd

And the
subsequent
Behavi-
our of the
Chief
Priests
and Ru-
lers.

C c

so

so fine a Topick of Declamation (had there been but a Suspicion to support it) is quite silent on this Head, and content to flourish on the common Place of Sedition and Herefy, profaning the Temple, and the like; mere Trifles to his Cause, in comparison to the other Accusation, had there been any ground to make use of it. And yet, as it happens, we are sure the very Question of the Resurrection came under Debate; 'for *Festus* tells *Agrippa*, that the *Jews* had certain Questions against *Paul* of one *Jesus*, which was dead, whom *Paul* affirm'd to be alive; after which, we are told that *Agrippa* heard *Paul* himself: but had he suspected, much less had he been convinced, that there had been a Cheat in the Resurrection, he would hardly have said to him, at the End of his Conference, ' *Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.*

How
Christ
rose on
the third
Day.

Thus stands the Case of our Lord's Resurrection: and the *Allegation* against it in *Point of Time* is a mere Trifle, arising from an Ignorance of the *Jewish* way of Computation. ' Our Saviour indeed, alluding to his own Resurrection, says, *Destroy this Temple*, meaning his own Body, *and in three Days will I raise it*

' *Acts* xxv. ' *Acts* xxvi. 28. ' The Trial, &c.
p. 49.

it up: The Angels represent his Predic-
tion thus, *the Son of Man shall be cruci-
fy'd, and the third Day rise again*; else-
where it is said, *after three Days*; and
again, that he was to be *in the Bowels of
the Earth three Days and three Nights*:
But all these Expressions are equivalent,
since it is usual in all Nations to reckon
the Night into the Day, whenever they
reckon by so many Days. The *Jews*
however have a way of Computation,
in some respects different from us: They,
as well as we, put frequently a part of
the Day for the whole; but then, ^w where-
as we reckon our Days (I mean our *na-
tural* Days of twenty-four Hours) from
twelve a-Clock at Night, to twelve the
next Night, they reckon from one Sun-
set to the next Sun-set, and all the
Time between them they call'd a *Day*;
even as *Moses* did, when he says, *" the
Evening and the Morning were the first
Day.* Now, allowing this manner of
Computation, and reckoning that the
first Day began on *Thursday* at Sun-set,
and ended upon *Friday* at Sun-set;
since our Saviour died on *Friday* about
three in the Afternoon, by putting a
part for the whole, here we have one
Day. *Saturday* is allowed on all Hands
to be another Day: and since the third

C c 2 Day

^w Dr. Pearce's Vind. Part 1. p. 12. ["] Gen. i. 5.

Day began on *Saturday* at Sun-set, and our Saviour rose on the Morning following; that part of the Day being likewise put for the whole, is fairly computed for the third Day: and thus we have the Prediction accomplished. But whatever Difficulty may be supposed in computing the time from the Crucifixion to the Resurrection, since the Resurrection happened during the time, that the Guards had the Sepulchre in keeping, 'tis the same thing, whether our Saviour chose to arise in the Beginning, the Middle, or the Conclusion of the Day; only it is a little more presumeable, that, after he had continued in the Grave, long enough to convince the People of the Certainty of his Death, beyond all Possibility of Recovery by natural Means, * he should take the first Occasion, consistent with his own Predictions, of returning from the Grave, in order to comfort and refresh the desponding Minds of his Disciples.

But

* Ne turbatos Discipulorum animos longa Mœstitudo cruciaret, denunciata *Tridui* moram tam mirâ celeritate breviavit, ut, dum ad integrum secundum diem pars primi novissima, & pars tertii prima concurrir, & aliquantum temporis spacio decideret, & nihil dierum numero deperiret. *Leo* de Resur. Dom. Ser. i. apud *Pearson* in Artic. v.

But though our Lord might have this tender Regard to his Disciples, yet the *unbelieving Jews*, (especially the Chief Priests and Rulers) were, of all Men, the most unworthy of such a particular Vouchsafement. They had already despised the Evidence that was given them; and not only so, but maliciously imputed the plainest Miracles, that ever were wrought, to the Power and Operation of the Devil. Him, who was the worker of them, they had vilified and blasphemed, rejected all his kind Offers, and enter'd into Measures to take away his Life: And therefore, in just Indignation, he denounces their Woes, and takes his solemn leave of them, *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! thou that killest the Prophets, and stonest them, that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy Children together, even as an Hen gathereth her Chickens under her Wings, and ye would not! behold your House is left unto you desolate, for, I say unto you, ye shall not see me henceforth till ye shall say, blessed is he that cometh in the Name of the Lord!*

Why he did not appear to the Jews, who deserved no such Favour from him.

But waving this Objection, and supposing, for the present, that our Saviour had appear'd publicly to the *Jewish Rulers*; yet, since neither the *Darkness* at his Death, nor the *Earthquake* at his

Which would have been lost upon them.

C c 3

Resur-

Resurrection; neither the Declaration of the *Centurion*, on the one, nor the Confession of the Soldiers, on the other Occasion, had wrought in them any Remorse; * we can hardly suppose, but that, had he so appear'd, they would have offer'd to lay violent Hands upon him, as they had before design'd to kill *Lazarus*, and for the same Reason: In which Case, had our Saviour vanished out of their Hands (as doubtless he would) what would they have concluded from hence, but that they had seen a Ghost, a Spectre, or Apparition; and what Conviction would *that* have wrought, but that their Senses had been impos'd upon by some magical Illusion; and what Effect would this have had upon their Minds, towards bringing them to a Belief that Christ was truly risen, and much less that he was the true *Messiah*? None at all.

And done
Injury to
the Christian
Cause.

Many of the *Jews* (among whom we may suppose the Chief Priests and Elders, who hired the Soldiers to stifle the Belief of Christ's Resurrection, with a false Story of their own Invention) were given up to *Hardness of Heart*, and would not have believed, or, if they believed, would not have testified, that they had ever seen Christ after his Resurrection.

* *South's Serm. Vol. 5.*

furrection. ^a Now, they that are wicked enough to deny what they believe, will, at a pinch, deny also what they know to be true: and therefore, supposing that our Lord had shewn himself to all his Enemies, and to *all the People*, and but some of them (especially of the great Men in Authority) had denied that ever they saw him after his Resurrection, this would have exceedingly weaken'd the Testimony of those, who vouch'd and confessed it: For he, who appeals to the Knowledge of another for the Truth of a Matter of Fact, is so far from gaining, that he loses Credit by the Appeal, if the other Person denies that he knows any thing of it. If therefore our Lord had appeared to his Persecutors (it being likely that his Disciples would appeal to their Knowledge) they, by protesting the contrary, would have made a terrible Advantage against the Christians upon that Appeal. Herein therefore is manifest the Wisdom of Christ, that, in making Choice of particular Witnesses, *viz.* such Persons only, as would be so far from dissembeling their Knowledge, that they would always be ready to seal their Testimony with their Blood, he hath settled the Christian Faith upon a better Foundation,

C c 4

tion,

tion, than if he had appeared in the Temple, or in the midst of *Jerusalem*, to the whole People of the *Jews*.

The Excellency
of the Apostles
Testimony.

For let us suppose, on the other hand, that our Saviour's appearing to the Chief Priests and Rulers, upon his Resurrection, should have had a contrary Effect; that, upon their Conviction, the whole *Jewish* Nation should be converted to the Christian Faith, and they, together with the Apostles, set out into foreign Countries, preaching the great Doctrine of Christ's Resurrection, and exhibiting Testimonials, under the Hands and Seals of the Grand *Sanhedrim*, that not only they themselves, but the whole Nation of the *Jews* was fully convinced of the Truth of it; yet we may very well question, whether this would have redounded to the general Advantage of Christianity. For might not such Persons, as now make Objections to the Testimony of the Apostles, have made much greater and stronger to the united Testimony of a Nation? And might not they have found out more room to suspect an Imposture, than they can now? It might then have been called, with a better Grace, a *stale Trick*, a *political Juggle*, a national Contrivance of the *Jews*, or any of those significant Names, that are now so current among us. *Fraud* might have

have then been supposed to shelter itself under the Umbrage of *Magistracy*; *free Enquiries* and Debates to be discouraged by the *Terror* and Awefulness of *Power*; and a general *Union* of Belief more justly reputed a general *Conspiracy*: but all this is happily evaded by the Method Christ's infinite Wisdom took to propagate the Belief of his Resurrection.

In short, ^b it is not the Number of Witnesses, but the Character and Qualifications of the Persons, and the Evidence itself, in its full Force and Circumstances, which are chiefly to be regarded in Matters of this Nature. If but a few Men can (as the Apostles did) by undeniable Miracles make it sufficiently appear, that what they say is true, and that God himself confirms the Truth of it; they can appeal to every Man's own Senses, before whom they work Miracles, and make every one, that sees them, a Witness to the Truth of their Doctrines. In this Case, God himself bears Witness to it; and what the *High-Priest* said upon a very different Occasion, every Stander-by finds himself constrain'd to declare in this; ^c *What need have we of any farther Witnesses? For we our selves have heard*
of

^b *Jenkins's Reasonableness of Christianity*, vol. 2.
^c *Matth.* xxvi. 65.

of their own Mouths (in the miraculous Gifts of Tongues) and seen with our own Eyes (in the many wonderful Works, which they have publickly wrought) a full and authentick Testimony of Christ's Resurrection.

The Resurrection of a Person from the Dead is indeed an Event so extraordinary, that it may well be expected, a more than common Evidence should be requir'd, to support its Credibility. Let us then see what the Credentials are, which the Witnesses of our Saviour's Resurrection have to exhibit upon this Occasion.

From
their
personal
Charac-
ter.

That the Apostles of our Lord were Men of Truth and Probity, void of Ambition and Self-design, clear in their Account, and uniform in their Testimony, is what I had occasion to shew, when their *Characters* and Qualifications fell under consideration before; and tho' the Number of Persons, who are the Witnesses of a *Matter of Fact*, abstracted from all other Considerations, is not (as I just now hinted) of itself absolutely convincing and conclusive; yet it carries this Persuasion along with it, that though an Imposture may lie concealed for a while in a few Hands, it is next to impossible that it should lie undiscover'd in

Their
Numbers,

in a great many. Now to what a Number of Witnesses our Saviour appear'd after his Resurrection, the Apostle to the *Corinthians* has given us this Enumeration; *“I delivered unto you, first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our Sins according to the Scriptures; and that he was Buried, and that he Rose again the third Day according to the Scriptures; and that he was seen of Cephas, then of the Twelve; after that he was seen of above five hundred Brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain at present. Besides this, he was seen of James, then of the Apostles, and last of all he was seen of me, as of one born out of time.* Here is a competent Number of Witnesses, and that they had sufficient Means and Opportunities to know and be inform'd of the Truth, is undeniable.

At his first return from the Grave indeed, our Saviour chose to discover himself to his Disciples by degrees. Hence we read of his *appearing and disappearing* so frequently; of his *with-holding their Eyes*, that they should not know him; of his coming silently to them, *when the Doors were shut*, and then, in a short time, *vanishing out of their sight* again.

But

And Opportunities of knowing the Truth.

• 1 Cor. xv. 3, &c.

But as these Expressions^f (when rightly understood) can no ways affect the *Reality* of his *Resurrection-Body*; so do they serve to denote his Reservedness at first, which proceeded, no doubt, from a kind Concern for his Disciples, least too sudden a Recovery from the *Despair*, they were in upon his Death, might make their Joy too excessive and tumultuous for them to bear: But when some few Interviews of this kind were passed, we find that they conversed with him with the greatest Freedom and Familiarity. They eat and drank with him; they saw him do many wondrous Works, and received Orders and Instructions from him about the Institution and Government of his Church: § They themselves declare, that, to convince them of the Truth of his Resurrection, he shewed them his *Hands and his Feet*, and, to one more incredulous than the rest, he indulged the Liberty of feeling the very *Prints*, which the *Nails* had made in them; that he upbraided them with Unbelief, in not giving Credence to a Matter so well attested; shewed them the Reasons of his Resurrection, and expounded to them the Scriptures,

con-

^f Vid. *Whitby* on *John* xx. 19. *The Trial of the Witnesses*, p. 66, &c. And *Dr. Pearce's Vind.* Part 1. p. 16. § *Ditton* on the Resurrection.

concerning this very Article, with so peculiar an *Energy*, that they felt their Hearts set on fire, even when they did not perceive that it was he. In short, they declare, that, at his Departure, he blessed them, and comforted them, and took his Leave of them, and that, after they had received all his Commands and Directions, they saw him *actually* taken up from them, and ascend into Heaven. Here was no room for any Dream or Deception: Men could never fancy that they saw a Person for forty Days together; that he eat and drank in their Presence, that he argued and expounded the Scriptures to them, convinced them of several Errors and Mistakes; gave them Promises, Rules, and Instructions, for their Comfort and the Government of a Church; and, after all, went up into Heaven in their Sight, whilst Angels stood by, and told them, that he, ^h *who was taken up into Heaven, should come in like manner again, as they had seen him go into Heaven*: This, I say, could be no Dream or Deception of their own; and therefore, if their Testimony was *false*, it must have proceeded from a malevolent Design to *abuse* Mankind with a downright Forgery.

But

^h *Acts* i. 11.

From
their In-
capacity to
execute
an Im-
posture.

The Im-
probability
of its Suc-
cess.

But now, supposing them wicked enough to engage in such an Undertaking ; yet, where would they have had Abilities to put it in Execution? ¹ They were not bred up in Courts, or engaged in such a way of Living, wherein the Arts and Intrigues of the World were either taught or practised ; they were no Men of polite Conversation, that, by the Helps of Philosophy, and Eloquence of Speech, were able to insinuate a Fondness, and raise an Esteem of themselves in the rest of Mankind ; but their Discourses were plain and homely, as well as their Education and Condition in the World such, as could neither prompt their Ambition, nor qualify them for great Attempts. They were, in short, poor illiterate *Fishermen*, and therefore not in much likelihood to entertain so great a Thought, as putting an *Imposture* upon the whole World. But, admitting they had cunning and courage enough to set about it, yet how could they possibly promise themselves Success, when the professed Enemies of Christ's Resurrection had so many urgent and weighty Reasons to induce them to use their utmost Efforts to prove it false ; when they had as much Time and Opportunity, as they could desire, in order to

¹ Ditton on Christ's Resurrection.

to discover the *Imposture*, and had Power in their Hands, to enable them to examine such Persons and Things, as might conduce to the Discovery. Nay, put the Case, that they were so *subtle* as to contrive, and so *fortunate* as to conceal the Imposture ; yet still we are to consider them as Men, and, consequently, of the same Passions and Desires with other Men ; and being so, ^k that they should relinquish all the darling Pleasures, Profits, and Accommodations of Life, and voluntarily expose themselves to Scorn, to Tortures, to Persecutions, and even Death itself, only to propagate a Story, which they themselves know to be a *Lye*, and that an absurd, insipid, incredible Lye (if a Lye at all) is a thing unnatural, and morally impossible.

The Sufferings it exposed them to.

Instances perhaps there may be found, ^{The Case} of Cheats, and Criminals, who have ^{of Christi-} sometimes asserted their Innocence, ^{an Mar-} and denied their Guilt, to the utmost ^{tyrs, and} Extremity ; but between Criminals ^{of Crimi-} dying and denying plain Facts, and the ^{nals or} Apostles dying for their Testimony, ^{Zeilots} there is this material Difference, that ^{quite dif-} *Criminals* deny the Truth, in hopes of saving their Lives, the Apostles willingly parted with their Lives, rather than deny

^k *South's Serm.* vol. 5. ¹ *Dr. Pearce's Vind.* Part 1. p. 9.

deny the Truth. Instances again we allow, there are many of such, as have suffered for Errors, as well as for Truths; as have given up their Lives, in a stubborn Defence, of *Doctrines*, which others as heartily have abhorr'd. But *Doctrines* and *Facts* are not the *same*: In *Doctrines* and *Matters of Opinion*, Men mistake perpetually; ^m but the Apostles Testimony of Christ's Resurrection, is a Testimony concerning a *Fact*, whereof they declared themselves *Eye-witnesses*, and it is more, than all the Records of Time can do, to shew us one single Man, much less a large Number of sober and serious Men, all chearfully undergoing the most violent Deaths, rather than *recant* what they knew to be a *direct Falshood*.

The Absurdity of supposing the Apostles guilty of an Imposture.

The Truth is, he who can believe, that, without any kind of human Means, or divine Assistance, the Apostles could impose upon all Mankind, in an Affair of the highest Importance to them; that so notorious an Imposture should vanquish and triumph over Truth, in spite of all the Opposition, which Heaven and Earth could make against it; that Persons, otherwise strictly *blameless* in their Lives, and rigidly virtuous, should so zealously labour to maintain a *Lye*, as
to

^m The Trial of the Witnesses, p. 106.

to expose themselves to the Fury of Men, and the Flames of Hell for the sake of it; that they should sacrifice their Lives and Souls to the *Ghost* of a crucify'd and reputed Malefactor; and, lastly, that God, who is *Truth itself*, should send upon them his blessed Spirit, and, by enabling them to perform miraculous Works, give Sanction and Testimony to Error and Falshood: He, I say, who denies the Resurrection of Christ, and can believe such *Absurdities* as these, refuses his Assent to the best attested *Fact* in the World, and yields it to another, which, of all *Legends*, is the most unlikely and improbable.

He must believe, that a Company of rude *Mechanicks*, without any Skill or Experience, without any Learning or Discipline, without any Arts of pleasing or recommending themselves, were able to put a Deception upon all Mankind, and lay their Plot so very deep, that none of all the penetrating and inquisitive Heads in the World, for a Succession of so many Centuries, and after the deepest Researches and Examinations, should find it possible to discover the least Fault or Flaw in the whole Contrivance. He must believe, that the chief Managers of this Imposture,

D d

after

▪ Ditton on the Resurrection.

after having had Reason enough, in the *Treachery* of one, and the *Cowardice* of another of their Company, to suspect one another, did, nevertheless, not only combine together themselves, but took into their Confederacy a large Party of Men; to the Number of *five Hundred* and upwards; and yet, for all this, the Confederacy was so kept, that neither Promises nor Threats, neither the Prevalence of Truth, nor Force of Conscience, nor Terrors of Death, ever prevail'd with one of them to turn *Informers*, and discover the Cheat. ° He must believe, that these Men, cunning and confederate as they were, had nevertheless divested themselves of all the Principles of Self-love and Tenderneſs, of Care and Regard to their own Preservation; that they despis'd all the Comforts and Enjoyments of Life; that they ventur'd upon Poverty and Misery, upon Shame and Obloquy, upon Persecution and Torments, upon Death and Damnation itself, and all for nothing, for no End or Purpose that can be imagin'd, or thought on, except to support an abominable Lye. He must believe, that these Cheats and Impostors, as vile and wicked, as silly and senseless, as they were, did, nevertheless, furnish Man-kind

kind with the most exact *System* of Morality that ever was, and taught such *Rules* of living, as were never to be expected from all the Schools of *Philosophy*; that they, whose purpose it was to abuse the World, laid the surest Foundations of Peace and Happiness; they, who were notorious *Hypocrites*, took indefatigable Pains to make other Men *upright*; and that they, who themselves believ'd nothing of a God, did impart the most rational and becoming Notions of him, and by no other Principles, than those of *Atheism* and *Irreligion*, kindled in the Hearts of Men an earnest Desire to serve and obey, to worship and adore him. But these are Absurdities too gross to be swallow'd; and yet every one, who disbelieves the *Veracity* of the Apostles asserting our Lord's Resurrection, must, in consequence, believe all this.

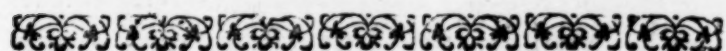
And now to recapitulate what has been said on this great Argument. Since, upon the Loss of the ancient Antichristian Books (which in all Probability would not have avail'd us much) we are now reduced, in our Enquiries into the Reality of *Christ's* Resurrection, to the sole Account of the *Evangelists*: Since, according to the Relation of these *Evangelists*, the several Circumstances of the

A Recapitulation of the whole Answer.

Sepulchre, where his Body was laid, and the great Care and Precaution, which the *Jewish* Rulers took about it, did effectually secure the Body from the Danger of being carried off, either by Fraud or Violence, had the Disciples been minded so to do : Since, from the whole Behaviour of these Disciples it appears, that they were too faint-hearted to attempt such an Enterprize ; or, if attempting it, unlikely to succeed ; or, if succeeding, in no Probability to make any Advantage by it : Since, after the Resurrection, the *Sepulchre* was left in such Condition, as clears the Disciples from the Imputation of any such Robbery, which their bitterest Enemies never once alledg'd against them, even when they had the fairest Call and Opportunity to introduce the Accusation : Since our blessed Lord, as soon as he had fulfilled the Time of his Interment, may well be supposed desirous of hastening his Return to his disconsolate Disciples, but was under no Concern to do the same to the *Chief-Priests* and *Rulers*, in whom this Exhibition of himself would have wrought no Conviction, and might probably have been an Obstruction to the Progress of his Gospel : Since, after his Resurrection, he appear'd so frequently to such a Number of his Disciples,

ples, and conversed so familiarly with them, that they could not possibly be mistaken in the Truth and Reality of his Person: Since they, in their Testimony of *this*, could have no Bribe upon their Affections, nor any Temptation of temporal Advantage to pervert them; but, on the contrary, a sure Prospect of the bitterest Persecutions, which they, notwithstanding, underwent with great Chearfulness, and seal'd, at length, the Truth of their Testimony with their Blood, which no Impostor was ever known to do: And, lastly, since in Confirmation of the Truth of their Testimony, God was pleased to accompany them with Signs and mighty Wonders, the Power of working Miracles, and the Gifts of his blessed Spirit: 'tis plain, that, in the whole Transaction, the Witnesses of our Saviour's Resurrection can be liable to no Suspicion. They could have no hand in stealing away their Master's Body: They could have no room to be deceiv'd themselves, in what they so frequently saw and felt; nor could they have any Provocation to deceive others, in an Affair, where they were sure to get nothing, but Danger and Distress: Consequently, we have all the assurance, which any *matter of Fact*, at this distance of Time,

is capable of, that the History of our Saviour's Life and Actions, his Doctrine and Miracles, and especially this great and momentous One, his *Resurrection from the Dead*, as related by the *Evangelists*, is *literally* true; and that all the *Absurdities* and *Incredibilities*, which some pretend to spy in it, are nothing, can be nothing, but the pure Fruits of a Mind deeply tinctur'd with the *Gall of Bitterness and Infidelity*.



S E C T. XXIII.

The Insufficiency of Reason, and Necessity of Revelation.

The Ob-
jection.

“ BUT let the Evidences of Chris-
 “ tianity be what they will, the
 “ Prophecies never so punctually ful-
 “ fill'd, and the Miracles never so faith-
 “ fully attested; yet, after all, of what
 “ service can these Things be, unless
 “ we cou'd perceive some Necessity for
 “ the Divine Interposition in this Re-
 “ spect? ^a For, since it is manifest, that
 “ God, from the Beginning, gave Man-
 “ kind some kind of Religion, *i. e.* some
 “ Rule and Law for the Conduct of
 “ their Lives, this Religion must ne-
 “ cessarily

^a Vid. *Christianity as Old as the Creation*, Passim.

“ necessarily be *absolutely* perfect, because
“ nothing, but what is absolutely Per-
“ fect, can come from a Being of in-
“ finite Wisdom and Perfection. And
“ if this Religion be absolutely per-
“ fect, it can admit of no Alteration,
“ nor is it capable of Addition or De-
“ minution, but is Immutable, as the
“ Author of it. And if God has given
“ Mankind such a Law as this, he must
“ have likewise given them sufficient
“ Means of knowing it, otherwise he
“ wou’d have defeated his own Intent
“ in giving it; because a Law, as far as
“ it is unintelligible, ceases to be a Law:
“ and therefore, as he was minded that
“ *all Men shou’d come to the Knowledge*
“ *of the Truth*, he must at all Times
“ have given all Men sufficient Means of
“ knowing it. Now the Religion, which
“ God has given us from the Beginning,
“ is the *Religion of Nature*, which con-
“ sists in observing those Things which
“ our Reason, by considering the Nature
“ of God and Man, and the Relation
“ we stand in to him, and to one an-
“ other, demonstrates to be our Duty.
“ Now if Religion consists in the Prac-
“ tice of such Duties, as result from our
“ several Relations; as God is *unchange-*
“ *able*, and human Nature continues
“ the *same*, our Duty to God and Man
D d 4 “ must,

“ must, from the Beginning of the
“ World to the End, be always the
“ same, and can never be chang’d in
“ whole or in part: So that no Per-
“ son, how much soever he pretends to
“ come from God, can teach us any
“ other Religion, or give us any other
“ Precepts, but what are founded in the
“ Reason of Things, and in this our Re-
“ lation to God and Man. And as this
“ Religion is perfect, and stands in need
“ of no Addition; so the only Means of
“ knowing it is the due Use of those
“ Faculties, by which we are distin-
“ guish’d from Brutes. For if God
“ will judge Mankind as they are ac-
“ countable, *i. e.* as they are rational
“ Creatures, the Judgment must hold
“ an exact Proportion to the Use, they
“ make of their Reason; because it
“ would be in vain to use it, if the due
“ use of it would not justify them be-
“ fore God. As God therefore design’d
“ that all Mankind should, at all times,
“ know what he Wills them to know,
“ believe, profess, and practice, and has
“ given them no other Means to this
“ purpose, but the use of their Reason;
“ as much as the Eye in the Instrument
“ of Sight, and Ear of hearing, Reason,
“ human Reason, I say, must be the
“ means of our knowing the Will of
“ God,

“ God, and of its self sufficient to pro-
 “ duce that Effect. In short is, human
 “ Reason, or natural Light is the only
 “ means of knowing all that God re-
 “ quires of us: All that God requires
 “ of us arises from the *fitness of Things*,
 “ and the Relations we stand into God
 “ and one another: And this is so suf-
 “ ficient, so full, and plain a Rule and
 “ Guide in all religious Duties; that no
 “ external Divine *Revelation* can add
 “ any thing to it, or require us to be-
 “ lieve any Doctrine, or Practice any
 “ Duty, which was not as fully known
 “ before. For if God be not an *arbitrary*
 “ Being, but acts according to the Rea-
 “ son and Nature of Things, he can re-
 “ quire nothing of us by *Revelation*, that
 “ was not requir’d before, nor can the
 “ Person avoid the Imputation of gross
 “ *Superstition*, who admits any Doctrines
 “ or Institutions, as matters of Religi-
 “ on, that are not manifest from the
 “ Reason of the Thing, or plainly re-
 “ quir’d by the Light of Nature. And
 “ therefore (to conclude) since the Re-
 “ ligion of Nature is in itself absolutely
 “ perfect, and our Reason abundantly
 “ sufficient to instruct us in all the Du-
 “ ties of it; as God can do nothing in
 “ vain, nor exercise his Power, in an
 “ extraordinary Manner, on Occasions
 “ un-

“ unworthy of an extraordinary In-
 “ terposition ; there seems to be no Oc-
 “ casion for any supernatural Revela-
 “ tion : and consequently the *Christian*
 “ Religion, which pretends to come
 “ from God, must either be a decepti-
 “ on in the whole, or only a Republi-
 “ cation of the Laws of Nature ; and,
 “ consequently again, if we do but live
 “ up to the Precepts of Reason, we
 “ need not doubt of our Acceptance
 “ with God, whatever our Sentiments
 “ about the *Doctrinal* and *Traditional*
 “ Parts of Christianity may be.

Answer'd
 by shew-
 ing what
Natural
Religion is.

Those, who have look'd into the *Re-*
ligion of Nature, have made no Diffi-
 culty to grant, that ^b there is a neces-
 sary fitness and unfitness in Things,
 even antecedent to all Consideration of
 particular Rewards and Punishments ;
 that this Difference of Things, Man-
 kind, by the due *Exercise* of their rati-
 onal Faculties, were *originally* formed
 by God to discern ; and that, from this
 Discernment, their Obligation too bserve
 such Laws or Rules of Life, as Result
 from the Nature of Man, consider'd as a
 rational Creature. All this they allow
 proceeds originally from God ; but they
 can by no Means infer from thence, hat
 it

it must be *absolutely Perfect*, even as its Author^c.

Perfection indeed is a term of some Ambiguity, and not so easily to be stated, because, what is perfect, in one respect, may have its Imperfections in another. In the several ranks and degrees of Creatures, some, we see, are endued with higher and more excellent Faculties than others; and in regard to these, such, as are inferior in any point of Merit, may be said to be *imperfect*, when compar'd with those, that do surpass them; and yet, considering, that both have all the Powers and Faculties, that are requisite to attain the End, for which they were created, we may, with Propriety enough, say, that both are *perfect*, but then it must be understood *in their different Kinds and Degrees*. And in like manner, if we shou'd say, that the original Religion, or Law of Nature, which consider'd Man only in the Integrity and Rectitude of his Faculties, was undoubtedly perfect, *i. e.* was defective of nothing, which, in such Circumstances, was necessary for the Attainment of its End; this will not hinder us from asserting (what we shall hereafter endeavour to make good) that when Man had deprav'd himself by Sin, and thereby introduc'd
a quite

Not absolutely perfect.

a quite different state of Things, the Religion of Nature then became *imperfect*, *i. e.* unable to answer the end, for which it was primarily design'd; and therefore a more perfect Discovery of the divine Will was no less than necessary, in order to direct him in his Duty. The exercise of his own Reason cou'd not do it: For it is with Reason,^c as it is with the Eye, which has a natural Power to see, and therefore can *naturally* need no help to discern such Things, as are the proper Objects of it, all requisite Circumstances suppos'd: But yet, if any of these requisite Circumstances be wanting; if the faculty itself be impair'd by any defect in the *Nerve*, or the distance be too great, or the *Medium* too thick; our Eyes may be of no use to us, and we may want a Guide to direct us in the plainest Things, as much as if we had no such Faculty at all.

Not Perpetual.

Those, that maintain the perpetuity of natural Religion, suppose Mankind to have always been the *same*; and thereupon argue^f from the Powers of Reason in a state of *Innocence* (in which the Understanding is suppos'd to be clear and strong, and the Judgment unbiafs'd, and free from the Influences of inordinate

^c Burnet's Demonst. of true Religion, Vol. I.

^f Bishop of London's 2d Past. Letter.

nate Appetites and Inclinations) to the Powers and Abilities of Reason, under the present *corrupt* State of Human Nature: But there is a manifest mistake in the Supposition, and a great fallacy in the Argument. For, ^h tho' the Nature of a rational Creature, *as such*, is always the same, yet there is a great Difference between a rational Nature, which, *abstractly* consider'd, does not vary, and Mankind, who, tho' endued with *that* Nature, are so far from being always the same, that, as to their personal Natures and Circumstances, they are continually *changing* in one respect or other; and these different Circumstances may be a good Reason for different Dispensations on God's part, as well as different Duties on theirs.

That Man, at first, was created in the full Perfection of his Nature ⁱ; with an *Understanding* capable of discerning, by Reason, whatever was necessary for him to know, and as instantly, as his Occasions shou'd require it; with his *Will* and *Affections* under a regular Subordination to his Understanding, so as not to choose or reject any thing, but as Reason should approve; and with a *Body* healthy and vigorous, and under an absolute

Man's original Integrity,

^h Burnet's 1st Argument.

ⁱ Dr. Burnet's Demonst. of true Religion. Vol. I.

and pre-
sent De-
pravati-
on.

absolute Subjection to the dictates of the Mind ; these are Positions, which we learn, not only from the sacred Records, but what we may easily deduce likewise from the natural Notions we have of God's infinite Wisdom, Goodness, and Power, who cannot be suppos'd to permit any thing, defective in its kind, to be the workmanship of his Hands. But how * vastly different our present State is from our Original, we ourselves, alas, are but too sensible, by a woeful Experience in our own Natures. For we find that we have not only a great *Weakness* in our Understandings, and a strange *disorder* in our Wills and Affections, but we likewise see a woeful Corruption of our bodily Faculties, and, instead of that absolute Subjection of its Passions and Appetites to right Reason, find too frequently ^a *a Law in our Members, warring against the Law in our Minds, and bringing us into Captivity*

* This Depravation of human Nature, was the general complaint of wise Men in all Ages, as might be shewn by innumerable Instances, but my Reader, I hope, will be content with one Citation for all. *Si tales nos natura genuisset, ut eam ipsam intueri & perspicere, eâque optimâ duce Cursum vite conficere possemus ; haud esset sane quod quisquam rationem & doctrinam requireret, nunc vero parvulos nobis dedit Igniculos, quos celeriter malis moribus Opinionibusque depravatis sic resingimus, ut nusquam natura Lumen appareat.* Cic. Tusc. Quest. L. 3.

^a Rom. vii. 23.

vity to the Law of Sin which is in our Members.

Whether therefore we believe or not believe the Scripture - account of *Eve* and the *Serpent*, or whether we take the History of Man's Fall in a *literal* or *allegorical* Sense; since there is an evident *change* wrought upon our Natures, and we are but too plainly degenerated, and miserably sunk very far below that *primitive* Perfection, which our first Parents had, when they came out of their Maker's Hands, the grand Question is,

“ Whether Reason, or the Light of
 “ Nature, in this deprav'd State of Man-
 “ kind, be, *of itself*, a sufficient Guide
 “ in matters of Religion and Morality;
 “ *i. e.* sufficient to instruct every Man in
 “ what he ought to know; to inform
 “ every Man in what he ought to do;
 “ and, with all, to incite and enable him
 “ to perform it.’ And to determine this
 Question, as it deserves, we shall examine,

The state
 of the
 Question,
 and its
 Nature.

1. What the present State of human Reason is?

2. What it *possibly* may be capable of, upon the Supposition of its best Improvement? And

3. What, upon Trial and Experiment, it has *actually* done: that from thence we may state the true Measure and Standard

dard of its Ability? For we must observe, by the way, that ^b an enquiry about the strength and sufficiency of Reason to guide and preserve Men in the Knowledge and Practice of true Religion is as much to be resolv'd by *Fact* and *Experience*, as if the enquiry were about the *shape* of Man's Body, or the *number* of his Senses: And to talk of a light and strength of Reason, *natural to Man*, which *Fact* and *Experience* have never yet prov'd, is every whit as absurd, as to talk of certain natural Senses and Faculties of his Body, which *Fact* and *Experience* have never yet discover'd.

The present state of human Reason.

As to its Imperfection.

Now we readily agree, that the great Principle of Action in human Nature is Reason; insomuch that to judge according to its Direction is not so much the privilege of the Philosopher, as it is essential to our very Beings, and as much inseparable from all Persons, as is the Sense of their own Existence: But then we are to consider how small a portion of Light any Man's Reason has, that can be properly call'd *its own*: For, as we derive our Nature from our Parents, so that, which we generally call *natural Knowledge*, or the *light of Nature*, is a Knowledge and Light, that is made natural to us by the same Authority, which makes

^b *Law's Case of Reason fairly stated.*

makes a certain Language, certain Customs and Modes of behaviour natural. Nothing in this Case seems to be our own, but a *bare Capacity* to be instructed, or a Nature fitted for any Impressions; as capable of Vice, as Virtue; and as liable to be made an *Hottentot*, by being born among *Hottentotes*, as to be made a *Christian*, by being born among *Christians*: so that our moral and religious Knowledge is not to be imputed to the *internal* Light of our own Reason and Nature, but to the Happiness of having been Born among reasonable Beings, who have made a Sense of Religion and Morality as natural to our Minds, as articulate Language is to our Tongues. We allow indeed that there is a moral Distinction between Good and Evil, Right and Wrong, founded in the Nature of Things; but then we maintain, that it is not from a philosophical Contemplation of the Fitness of the one, and the Unfitness of the other, that we prefer Virtue to Vice, but from the Instruction of those, who had the Care of our Education, and the Formation of our Judgments from our Infancy: nor can we allow, that our Knowledge of God and Divine Things, our Opinions of the Soul's Immortality, of a future State of Rewards and Punishments, &c. are any

more the Effects of our natural Light, than our erect Posture, or articulate Language are.

When we arrive at an Age of more Maturity indeed, and happen to have a Genius fitted for philosophical Enquiries, we may thence deduce Proofs for the Being and Attributes of a God, the Reasonableness of Religion, and Morality, the Nature of our Souls, and the Certainty of a future State, and find that the Opinions and Tradition of Mankind concerning these Things are well founded ; but these we must allow are an *After-knowledge*, not common to Men, but *accidental* Confirmations of that Sense of God, Religion, and Morality, which, more or less, was fixed in us by the Institution and Authority of those, among whom we have had the good Fortune to live.

Now if this be the State of Reason, as it is in Man ; if this be all the Light, that we have from our own Nature, *viz.* a *bare Capacity* of receiving good or bad Impressions, right or wrong Opinions and Sentiments, according to the particular Country we chance to be Born in ; if we are nothing without the Assistance of Men ; nay, if we are foolish and helpless Animals, till Education and Experience have revealed unto us the Wisdom and Knowledge of our Fellow-

low-creatures; then are we poorly furnished, God knows, to assert and maintain the absolute Perfection of our own Reason, in Opposition to the Necessity and Advantage of a Divine Revelation. But this is not all.

It is not only the *Imperfection* of our Reason, but its frequent *Depravity* like-^{and Depravity.} wise, that ought to abate our Confidence in it; since, upon due Consideration, we shall find, that ^d all the Mutability of our Tempers, the Disorders of our Passions, and the Corruptions of our Hearts; all the *Reveries* of the Imagination, all the Contradictions and Absurdities, that are to be found in humane Life, and humane Actions, are strictly and properly the Mutability, Disorders, Corruption, and Absurdities of *humane Reason*.

We indeed, in the common Forms of Speech, talk of our Reason, as a distinct Principle from our Passions, Affections, and Humours: But this is only a Distinction of Language, made at Pleasure, and without any real Foundation in the Things themselves. The same Principle, that is the Agent of all that is good in us, must be equally the Agent of all that is evil, for the Action and Power of Reason is as much required to make

E c 2 any

^d *Law's Case of Reason*

any thing vicious, as to make it virtuous; and if so, Reason is certainly the *worst*, as well as the *best* Faculty we have, and not only the Principle of Virtue, but the certain Cause likewise of all that is base and shameful in humane Life.

Brutes, we know, are incapable of Imprudence and Immorality, because none of their Actions are Actions of Reason; and therefore, if our Reason is the only Faculty, that distinguishes us from Brutes, it must certainly follow, that all those Irregularities, whether of Humour, Passion, or Affection, which cannot be imputed to Brutes, must solely be ascrib'd to the Faculty, whereby we are distinguished from them; and, consequently, every thing that is vain, foolish, shameful, false, treacherous, and base, must be the sole Product of our Reason: since, if they proceeded from any other Principle, they could have no more Vanity, Falseness, or Baseness in them, than Hunger or Thirst have. And therefore, as all, that is faithful, just, and wise, can only be attributed to that which is done by our Reason, so, by plain consequence, all that is vain, false, and shameful, can only be imputed to any acts, as they are the acts of Reason. And if this be
the

the true State of Reason; if all that is wise or absurd, holy or profane, glorious or shameful, in Thought, Word, or Deed, is to be imputed to it; then is it as gross an Absurdity to talk of the *absolute Perfection* of human Reason, as of the unspotted Holiness of humane Life, or the absolute Infallibility of humane Conjectures: Since upon Examination it is found to be a Principle of an uncertain Nature, productive of Vice as well as Virtue, and capable of leading us into Error, as well as discovering to us Truth. But

2. To take Reason under a more favourable Aspect, we will suppose it, at present, raised to its highest Pitch of *Improvement*, and so enquire, whether it is capable, in this State, to settle a proper Rule of Religion and Morality for the Conduct of human Life.

Reason in its highest Improvement unable to settle a Rule of Religion.

1. It cannot be denied indeed, but that, almost in every Age, there have been, in the Heathen World, some wise, brave, and good Men, who have carried Humane Reason to a great Height, and, in the Study and Disquisition of Natural Religion, have made no mean Discoveries: But then there is room to suspect, that their Discoveries of this kind were not so much owing to the Strength and Sagacity of their

The ancient Philosophers had their best Knowledge from Revelation.

Reason, as to the *Traditions*, they might receive from their Ancestors, or the Conversation, they might have ^e with the *Hebrews* and *Egyptians*. That there were certain Principles, deliver'd by God to *Noah*, and thence propagated among his Posterity, thro' all Ages and Nations, is what we shall hereafter observe: And therefore, allowing the Fact at present, we cannot but imagine, that many Things, which seem now to be Deductions from natural Reason, might have their Original from Revelation; because Things, once discovered, may seem easy and obvious to Men, which they, notwithstanding, would never of themselves have been able to find out. We wonder ^f now, not a little, that Men could ever suppose there were no *Antipodes*, and are apt to admire how *America* cou'd be so long concealed, rather than how it came at last to be discovered. The Case is the same in many other Discoveries, especially in *moral* Truths, which are so agreeable to Reason, that they may seem the natural Productions

^e *Josephus* tells us, that *Pythagoras* and *Thales* were the Scholars of the *Chaldeans* and *Hebrews*, and quotes *Hermippus*, as asserting, that *Pythagoras* deriv'd many Truths of his Philosophy from his Conversation with the *Jews*, which he might well do, having studied in *Egypt* above twenty Years. *Richardson's* Usefulness and Necessity of Revelation.

^f *Jenkins's* Reasonableness, L. 1.

of it, though a contrary Custom and Inclination, and the Subtilty of Satan, working upon our depraved Nature, might perhaps have made it very difficult, if not impossible, without a Revelation, to discern many Doctrines, even in Morality, which are now common and familiar to us.

However this be, 'tis certain, that the most eminent Philosophers, such as *Pythagoras*, *Plato*, *Democritus*, and others, finding but a Dearth of Knowledge at Home, travelled for Improvement into other Parts ; and, as *Egypt* was accounted the chief Seat of Learning, there were few Men of Note, who went not thither to compleat their Studies ; where, conversing with the *Jews*, who were there in great Numbers, and having the Opportunity of consulting the Law of *Moses* in the famous *Ptolemean* Library, they might from thence collected many remarkable Doctrines, though, when they came to publish them, they disguised and blended them with their own Notions and Inventions.

We will suppose however, that one of these *Sages*, without any such foreign Assistance, had, by deep and intense Study, ^{Were Ignorant of a proper Form of Divine Worship.} satisfied himself of the Existence of a God ; acquired right Notions of his

E e 4

* *Conybeare's Expediency of Divine Revelaton.*

his Power, Wisdom, Justice, and Goodness; established his Belief of a Providence; found out the Relation, in which we stand to God as his Creatures, our Obligations to worship and obey him in general, the Duties of Justice, Charity, and Temperance, in the more obvious Instances, and our Obligations to suffer, as often as we deviate from the known Rules of our Duty. Suppose him, I say, fraught with this Knowledge of his own Acquisition, yet, when his Reason comes to remind him of the general Necessity of worshiping God, and of obeying his Will, how will he come to the Knowledge of what that particular Worship is, which will be acceptable to him, or what those particular Duties are, in which he expects to be served. ^h Obedience to the Obligations of Nature, and Imitation of the moral Attributes of God, the wisest Philosophers might easily know were undoubtedly the most acceptable Service, that they could pay him; yet, as some *external* Adoration seemed also to be necessary, how this was to be performed, they could not with any certainty discover: and therefore not only they themselves complied generally with the outward Religion of their Country, but advised others to do the

the same, and so, notwithstanding all their wise Discourses and rare Discoveries, fell lamentably into the Practice of the most foolish Idolatry and Superstition.

But we will suppose our Philosopher to have surmounted this Difficulty, and to have devised, for himself and his Followers, a compleat and rational Form of Worship; yet, since he knows himself to be frail and peccable, he cannot but be conscious of many Transgressions in Life, whereby he hath merited the Divine Displeasure, and expos'd himself to the dread of Punishment: In which Case, what Method will his natural Reason suggest to atone for his Sins, and make Satisfaction to the injur'd Majesty of Heaven? Reason will tell him, ⁱ that God is *good*, as is visibly seen in the whole Creation, and in the ample Provision, which is every where made for the comfort and well-being of all his Creatures. Reason will tell him, that God is *good to Sinners*, as is manifest from his wonderful Patience and Long-suffering towards them, under the daring and manifold Provocations, they are, every Day, guilty of, but Reason cannot shew him, how long this Patience will last, or how far this Goodness to Sinners will extend.

Of the
Method
of ob-
taining
Pardon
for Sin.

The

ⁱ *Burnet's Demonst. of true Religion, Vol. 1.*

The same Reason, that assures him of God's Goodness and Patience, will likewise inform him of his Wisdom and Holiness; and, as these must agree in the same perfect Nature, Reason can admit of no other Notion of his Goodness, but such as is consistent with his Wisdom and Holiness: And the natural Consequence of this must be, that God will shew himself as good to Sinners, as his Wisdom and Holiness shall direct; but who can tell, when the Wisdom and Holiness of God shall exact severer Methods?

The best, and indeed the only Thing, that a Sinner can do, to obtain a Reconciliation with God, is to *Repent*:^k But whether Repentance alone will do, or whether God will not require something farther, for the Vindication of his Justice, and of the Honour and Dignity of his Laws and Government, and for the expressing more effectually his Indignation against Sin, before he will restore Men to the Favour they have forfeited, our Philosopher can never satisfactorily be assur'd.^l A good Father, he sees, forgives his Son, when he Repents; a good Master his Servant; and a generous Man his Enemy: But, at the same time, he perceives, that, in good

^k *Clark's Demonstration, &c.*

^l *Christianity as Old, &c. p. 391.*

and wise Governments, Magistrates find it proper to punish Malefactors, notwithstanding all their Penitence : And, if Pardon, in many Cases, does not always follow Repentance, what Trust or Dependence can he have on it ?

The Truth is, the Heathen World was so little acquainted with this Notion of the Validity of Repentance to expiate Sin, that we find it not once mentioned in all their Writings. Their great Reliance was on Sacrifices ; but, as ^m these rather suggested to them the *Death*, which they deserv'd, than the *Deliverance*, which they wanted, the most considering Persons among them could not forbear declaring, that they thought such Rites could avail little or nothing towards appeasing the Wrath of a provok'd God, or making their Prayer acceptable in his Sight.

Thus you see how incompetent human Reason (even in its highest pitch of Elevation) is, to fix those Points, which are purely of a *Religious* Nature ; and in what Doubts and Perplexities Mankind must necessarily have been left, when they neither knew the way of serving God acceptably, when he was pleas'd ; nor of reconciling themselves to him, when he was known to be angry

^m Conybeare's Expediency of Divine Revelation.

gry with them: Let us now proceed to enquire, whether it afforded them any better help.

Reason
unable to
settle a
Rule of
Morality.

2. In settling the *Rules of Morality*. 'Tis an easy Matter for Christians, with the Light of Revelation (by which they are taught every thing necessary) shining round about them, to shew how the several Precepts of Morality agree with the Dictates of Reason: But, without that Light, to have discover'd these Things by Reason only, had been a Thing next to impossible. The Philosophers indeed, who since the Accession of this Light, have publish'd their several Systems, have been more clear and uniform, both in the Measures of human Duty, and in the Motives requisite to the Performance of it; ⁿ but then this Clearness and Uniformity are really owing to the help of Revelation, which has given us a far more exact Knowledge than we had before, of the Nature and Attributes of God, from whence many of the Duties do immediately flow, and also a far greater Certainty of future Rewards and Punishments, as well as a clearer Conviction of the necessity of Sobriety, Temperance, and other moral Virtues, as Preparations for our Happiness in the next Life, by perfecting our Nature in this.

We

▪ Bishop of London's 2d Pastoral Letter.

We will suppose, however, that our Philo-
 sopher, by the mere strength of his Parts,
 and without any Assistance from Reve-
 lation, had drawn up a compleat Scheme
 of Morality for the publick use; yet
 how would he go about to convince the
 publick of the reasonableness of sub-
 mitting to it? I know of no way, but
 either by the Strength of *Reason* or *Ar-
 gument*, or by his own *private Credit
 and Authority*; but neither of these up-
 on Trial, I fear, would be found suffici-
 ent to answer his Purpose. For suppose
 his Scheme never so compleat, and him-
 self never so able to enforce it; yet con-
 sidering the Carelessness and want of
 Attention in some, the Prejudices and
 and false Notions in others, the sensual
 Appetites and worldly Business in many,
 and the vicious Practices and evil Ha-
 bits almost in all, we shall find, that his
 Rules and Precepts would be far from
 meeting with that ready Reception,
 which he might imagine. The Bulk
 and Generality of Men (even in the pre-
 sent times of Science) are incapable
 of entering far into deep and abstruse
 Reasoning. Some labour under na-
 tural Defects, which no Care or Study can
 remove; others are confined to a little
 set of Notions suggested by Things that
 are familiar to them; and not a few
 have

The an-
 cient Phi-
 losophers
 incapa-
 ble to in-
 struct the
 World,

either by
Argument.

have the greatest share of their Time taken up in providing themselves with the Necessaries of Life. To many, that have more Leisure and Opportunity, thinking and reasoning is so difficult a Task, that they choose rather to content themselves with Ignorance in such Points, as they are not bold enough to hope for Knowledge: In some, that might prevail with themselves to attend to the Instructions of the Philosopher,^o their pre-conceiv'd Opinions, concerning religious and moral Matters, are a strong Obstruction: And by those, who had devoted themselves to Licentiousness, the most prevailing reasonings would not be regarded, when they came to disturb them in their darling Vices, and to teach them what they had no desire to know.

Or by
their own
Authority.

Thus, by one means or other, our Philosopher's good Intention of reforming the World would be entirely lost, unless (which comes next to be considered) his own Credit and Authority, would stand him any stead, but on this he can have no just Reliance. The natural Equality of all Men is a Notion, which, however true, when rightly understood, is liable to be abused to very unhappy

^o Burnet's Demonst. Vol. 1.
diency of Divine Revelation.

^p Combeare's Expediency

unhappy Purposes. It will indeed follow from hence, that no one Person, merely as a Man, has a right to govern or prescribe to others, for thus far all Men are upon a Level. But yet, as there are different *intellectual* Capacities and Abilities, so it is, in its own Nature, fitting, that those, who are incapable of directing themselves, should submit to the Council and Direction of others: But the misfortune is, that the generality of Mankind are not sensible in what Instances they want Direction. They will allow perhaps that, in Matters of *Science*, wherein they have no concern, those Persons, whose Studies have tended that way, may have gain'd a superior Skill; and, in such Cases, they will readily submit, and not set their own crude Conceptions against the Decisions of those Persons, whom they acknowledge *Learned*: But we are much mistaken, if we expect the same Submission in moral Matters. Here every Man presumes he is capable of determining for himself; for every one will claim a Right to judge of his own Pleasures or Pains, of the Fitness or Unfitness of his own proper Actions, and the good or bad Consequences that attend them; and consequently he will be apt to reject the Authority of the wisest Man upon Earth
in

in Points of this Nature, unless it be conformable to his own private Opinion. For let us suppose our Philosopher addressing himself to a *Libertine*, and persuading him to leave his Vices, and confine himself within the Rules that he would prescribe him; might not he answer his Adviser?—" I am no more
 " under your Direction in this Affair,
 " than you are under mine. In some
 " Things, as a Man of more enquiry,
 " I may permit you to see for me, but
 " you must allow me, I hope, to feel
 " for my self. I feel my self happy in
 " the way of Life, which I have chosen,
 " and shall become very uneasy
 " by the Restraints, which you advise.
 " Pursue you then your own Satisfaction,
 " on, in what manner you please, and
 " leave me to the same Liberty in consulting mine". I see not what return he could make to such an Answer, or by what Argument he could hope to prevail on his Compliance; but I plainly see the justness of that reply, which an ancient Author makes to the Question, *Did the Philosophers then teach nothing that was right?* " Yes, says he, many Things; " but their Precepts have no Weight, " because they are humane, and want
 " a divine

¹ *Roger's Necessity of a Divine Revelation:*
² *Lactantius, L. 3. c. 27.*

“ a divine Sanction. They are not believ’d, because he, who hears, thinks himself a Man, as well as he, who teaches.” And therefore, to remedy this Default, ^f some Philosophers (when they pretended to prescribe a general Rule) have called in the Assistance of a *superior* Being, and endeavoured to stamp a divine Credit on their own Institutions; which, tho’ it was a vile Imposition, is nevertheless a plain Argument, ^g that no Principle was presum’d sufficient to engage the Reverence and Submission of Men to any System of Rules, but a Persuasion that they came from Heaven, and were ratified by divine Authority.

Thus we have examin’d the utmost Capacity of human Reason, unassisted by divine Revelation, in order to find out how *far* (upon the Supposition of its utmost *Improvement*) it might possibly go: And come now to enquire how far (upon Trial and Experiment) it actually did go, or rather how far it *fell short* of being an adequate Guide in Matters of *Religion* and *Morality*.

3. It will be no Disparagement, I hope, to the present Age, to suppose ^h that the ancient Philosophers had as great Strength

The ancient Philosophers ignorant in many Points.

^f Conybear’s Expediency. ^g Roger’s Necessity of a Div. Rev. ^h Bp. of London’s 2d Pastoral Letter.

F f of

of Reason and Judgment, as sincere a Desire to find out Truth, and as great Diligence in enquiring after it, as any of our modern Unbelievers ; and yet, if we look into their Writings, we shall find, that they were utterly ignorant in many great and important Points of Religion.

They were ignorant of the true Account of the *Creation* of the World, and the Original of Mankind ; and therefore * some of them held all things to be *eternal*, while † others imputed them to *Chance*, and those, that allow'd them a Beginning, knew nothing of the Manner and Gradations, whereby they rose into so beautiful an Order.

They were ignorant of the Origin of *Evil*, and therefore they devised *two* contrary Principles, in perpetual Conflict with each other ; and tho' they were sensible that human Nature was strangely corrupted, yet they acknowledged that its Corruption was a Disease, whereof they knew not the Cause, and could not find out the Cure.

They were ignorant of the Method, which God in his eternal Counsel, had ordain'd for the Recovery of lost Man, without any Infraction upon his Attributes. This was a Mystery *far above*
and

* *Peripateticks.*† *Epicureans.*

and out of *their Sight*; tho' they might, by the Light of Reason, perceive, that it was incompatible with the Divine Wisdom to create Man in a State of *Depravation*, and with the Divine Goodness to suffer him for ever to lie remediless under it.

They were ignorant (as we observ'd before) of any Form of Worship, that might be *acceptable* to God, and of any certain way of appeasing his Wrath, when they were conscious of their Offences against him; and therefore we find *Cicero*, the greatest and best Philosopher, that *Rome*, or perhaps any other Nation ever produced, ² allowing Men "to continue the Idolatry of their Ancestors; and advising them to conform themselves to the superstitious Religion of their Country, in offering such Sacrifices to different Gods, as were by Law established."

They were ignorant, at least they taught nothing, of the exceeding Love of God towards us, of his Desire of our Happiness, and his Readiness to conduct us in the Ways of Virtue; and therefore ² some of them made their supreme

F f 2

Jupiter

² *A patribus acceptos Deos placet coli, De Legib. L. 2. Item illud ex Institutis Pontificum & Auruspicum non mutandum est; quibus Hostiis immolandum cuique Deo; ibid: ² Epicureans..*

Jupiter a solitary kind of Being, wholly taken up in the Contemplation of his own Perfections, and leaving the Government of all sublunary things at least, either to some *inferior* Agents, or to the Guidance of a *blind* unthinking *Chance*. And lastly,

They were ignorant, at least ^b they taught nothing, of a divine Grace and Assistance towards our Attainment of Virtue, and Perseverance in it; and therefore we find ^c others of them making such insolent Beasts, equalling themselves to the Gods, and sometimes ^d preferring themselves before them, because they had Difficulties to encounter, which made their Conquest of Vice, and their Improvements in Virtue more glorious in them, than in the Gods, who were good by the Necessity of their Nature.

Doubtful
and un-
certain in
others.

And, as these Philosophers were utterly ignorant of some, so were they far from being clear and consistent with themselves in other great Articles of Religion.

They

^b *Non quis, quod bonus vir esset, gratias Diis egit unquam. Jovem optimum maximum ob eas reas appellant, non quod nos justos, temperatos, sapientes efficiat, sed quod salvos, incolumes, opulentos, copiosos. Cic. de Nat. Deorum. Lib. 3.* ^c The Stoicks. ^d *Est aliquid, quo sapiens antecedit Deum: ille natura Beneficio, non suo, sapiens est. Sen. Epist. 53. Si cui virtus animusque in corpore præsens, hic Deos aequat. Epist. 92.*

They had but dark and confus'd Notions of the Nature of God ; and therefore the celebrated *Socrates* ingenuously confess'd, that all he knew of God was, that he knew nothing, and for this Reason endeavour'd to draw Men off from *divine* and celestial Contemplations, as being what he found too high for humane Reason to understand, and to betake themselves to the Study of *Civil Life*.

They had but * dark and confused Notions of the *Summum Bonum*, or Supreme Felicity of Man; and therefore *Cicero* tells us, that there was such a Dissention among them upon this Head, that it was almost impossible to reckon up their different Sentiments, even while himself is setting down the Notions of above twenty of them, all equally extravagant and absurd.

They had but weak and uncertain Notions of the Immortality of the Soul : for, however they might perceive it to have a spiritual Existence, † yet they could from thence deduce no Argument, but that God might destroy it, if he pleas'd ; and therefore ‡ *Cicero* plainly declares, that *which of the two Opinions*

F f 3

* *Vid. Burnet's Demonst. L. 1.* † *Stebbing on the Use and Advantage of Revelation.* ‡ *Tusc. Quest, L. 1.*

nions [that the Soul is Mortal, or that it is Immortal] *be true, God only knows*; which, among other Declarations of the like Nature, might probably induce ^h Seneca to say, *That Immortality, however desirable in it self, was rather promised, than proved by these great Men.*

They had weak and uncertain Notions of a future State: for though ⁱ their Poets had prettily fancied an *Elysium* and an *Hell*, yet all sober Men looked upon these, rather as well contrived Restraints for the Vulgar, than any Matters of their own Belief; and therefore ^k Socrates is introduced, as saying, *I hope there is a Place where I, and good Men shall meet, yet I cannot affirm it. I wish,* says ^l Cicero, *that you could prove to me that our Souls are Immortal; and, if wise Men have said true,* says ^m Seneca, *there is a Place to receive us after Death*; so that, after all their Meditations on a future State, they wanted Arguments to convince themselves, and ended all their Disquisitions in a Peradventure and a Wish. But, what is more,

They had no Notion at all of the Resurrection of the Body: For, tho' their Poets make frequent mention of the Ghosts of departed Men, appearing in a visible Form,

^h Ep. 102. ⁱ Young's Sermon. Vol. 1. ^k Plato in Phaed.
^l Tusc. Quest. ^m Ad Lucil.

Form, and retaining, in the Shades below, their former Shape ; yet by this (if they mean any thing) they mean no more, than that the Soul, after this Life, passes into another State, and is there invested with a Body made up of light *Aerial* Particles, quite different from what it were before : For, that the gross Matter, which they saw laid in the Grave, and turned to Corruption, or burnt to Ashes, and blown away in the Air, should ever be raised or collected again, and revived, of this the most *Speculative* among them had no Conception. And therefore, when ⁿ St. Paul preached at *Athens* (which was then the great Seat of Learning) *Jesus and the Resurrection*, so ignorant were the Philosophers, that at first they took them to be a new God, and a new Goddess ; but, when, upon a second hearing, they came to perceive what he meant by the Resurrection of the Dead, *they mocked him*, and made Ridicule of what he said.

Thus ignorant, or thus doubtful at least, were some of the greatest Names in Antiquity of these prime and fundamental Truths, which must be acknowledged the great Barriers of Virtue and Religion : And therefore we need less wonder, that we find so many of them

They abetted wicked Practices.

F f 4

abetting

ⁿ *Acts* xvii.

abetting Practices apparently flagitious ;
 ° That we find every Sect esteeming *Revenge*, not only lawful, but commendable, and the desire of *popular Applause*, the greatest Incentive to all kind of Virtue ; that we find some of the greatest of them full of the Praise of *Self-Murther*, and setting themselves for the Example of it to their Followers : that we find *Cato* commending *Fornication*, as a proper Remedy against *Adultery* ; *Plato*, asserting the Expediency of Mens having *their Wives in common* ; *Chrysippus*, teaching the worst of *Incest*, that of Fathers with their Daughters, and pleading the Lawfulness of *unnatural Lust* ; that we find, in short, whole Fraternities degrading humane Nature into that of Beasts ; the *Cynicks* laying aside all the natural Restraints of Shame and Modesty, to commit their Lusts openly ; and the *Stoicks* affirming, that no Words or Speech of any kind ought to be censured or avoided, as filthy and obscene. So true is the Observation, which ^p *Quintilian* makes of the Philosophers of his time, *viz. That the most notorious Vices were screen'd under that Name, and that they did not labour to maintain the Character of Philosophers*

• Bishop of London's 2d Pastoral Letter, and *Fenkin's* Reasonableness, Vol. 1. ^p Inst. L. 1. Praef.

losophers by Virtue and Study, but concealed very vicious Lives under an austere Look, and a different Habit from the rest of the World.

And, if these Men of Speculation and profound Reasoners, who made Religion and Nature their daily Study, were thus ignorant in their Notions, and corrupt in their Principles. What Reason have any of our modern Contemners of Revelation to presume, that, if they had liv'd in those Days, and without the Light of the Gospel, they should have behav'd better? ^{Modern Unbelievers censur'd.} What Grounds to imagine, that they would have been wiser, than *Socrates*, and *Plato* and *Cicero*? How are they certain, they should have made such a right use of their Reason, as to have discover'd the Truth exactly, without being any way led aside by Prejudice or Neglect? Had their Lot been among the *Vulgar*, how are they sure, they should have been so happy, or so considerate, as not to be involv'd in that Idolatry and Superstition, that Wickedness and Immorality, which then over-spread the World? Had they join'd themselves to the *Philosophers*, which Sect would they have followed (for they were all erroneous) or what

Book

¹ *Clark's Evidence of Natural and Revealed Religion.*

Book would they have made the adequate Rule of their Lives and Conversations? Or had they set up for themselves, how are they certain, they should have been able to deduce the several Branches of their Duty, and to apply them to the several Cases of Life, by Argumentation and Dint of Reason? 'Tis one thing to find out a Rule at first, and another to perceive its Agreement with Reason, after it is found out for us; and the Difficulty is not much, when once we know our Duty, to begin and deduce its Obligation from Reason, but to begin and discover our Duty in all points, with all its true Motives, merely by the help of natural Reason, is a Work of Pains and Nicety, and like groping for an unknown Way in an obscure Twilight. And therefore those, who think themselves sufficient for such an undertaking, at least must be thought to *condemn the Generations* that are past, by their disparaging a Dispensation, which the best, and wisest, and least-superstitious of the Philosophers of old, were not ashamed to confess their want of.

The wicked
State of
the Hea-
then World
shewn
from
Scripture.

Men may talk of the natural Light and Power of Reason, as long as they please, and the Topick perhaps is well enough for popular Eloquence to

flourish

flourish upon : But when we appeal to Experience, we shall soon find it empty Boast and pompous Harangue. If ever there was a Time, when human Reason might be a Guide in matters of Religion, ' it was when our Saviour came into the World, or sometime before ; when Knowledge of all kinds, and particularly the Study of Philosophy, was cultivated and improv'd with the greatest Application, and by the ablest Hands : And yet, it is hardly possible to read the first Chapter of the Epistle to the *Romans*, without Amazement, and many mortifying Reflections, to find rational Creatures capable of so wretched a Degeneracy, that no Object was so despicable, as not to be thought worthy of divine Honours, no Vice so detestable or brutish, as not to obtain, not only in common Conversation, but even in their Rituals of Religion, and most solemn Acts of publick Worship. For, ' *having their understanding darken'd* (as he tells us elsewhere) *and being alienated from the Light of God, thro' the Ignorance that was in them, because of the Blindness of their Hearts,* they incur'd not only the grossest Idolatry, and the most unnatural Lusts, but " *were filled*

' Bishop of London's 2d Pastoral Letter.
iv. 18. " Rom. i.

' Eph.

filled likewise with Unrighteousness, Fornication, Wickedness, Covetousness, Maliciousness; were full of Envy, Murther, Debate, Deceit Malignity; were Whisperers, Backbiters, Haters of God, Despightful, Proud, Boasters, Inventors of evil Things; were Disobedient to Parents, without understanding, Covenant Breakers, without natural Affection, Implacable, Unmerciful, and (what is worst still) not only did these Things themselves, but took Pleasure likewise in those that did them.

In this Light it is, that the Apostle represents the State of the Heathen World, while it was under the Guidance of unassisted Reason: And if our Reason seems to guide us any better now; if it rejects those detestable Deeds of Darkness, and impious Modes of Worship, which it once reverenc'd and embrac'd, 'tis not because its Faculties are in themselves any clearer or stronger, than they were, but because it has submitted its Weakness and Ignorance, its Pride and Passions, to the Light and Authority of the Christian Revelation.
 * Take but away the Direction and Restraint of this Authority, and it will act just as it did, and relapse into the same Extravagances, the same Impiety, the

* Roger's Necessity of Divine Revelation.

the same Folly and Superstition, that prevailed on it before.

This is a true State of humane Reason, in its present ruinous and deprav'd Condition. In our *Minority*, equally capable of *bad* as well as *good* Impressions, and form'd entirely by the Examples we see, or by the Institutions of those, that have the Charge of our Education; in our *Maturity*, the Author of our Passions and Desires, our Humours and Appetites, and the sole Agent of all the *Evil*, as well as all the *Good* we do: In its highest Pitch of *Improvement*, uncapable of finding out any proper Offices of *Religion*, or fixing any certain Rule of *Morality* either for our selves or others: In the Breast of the greatest *Philosopher*, over-spread with Error, ignorant in many, and doubtful in all the great Principles and Motives of Religion, and, thereupon, ensnar'd in diverse hurtful Lusts; and much more in the Breasts of the *Vulgar*, sunk in Ignorance and Stupidity, and thereby submitted to the wiles of the Tempter, and *taken Captive by him at his Will*. And is this the Faculty, of which we hear such loud Boasts, and to which the *absolute Perfections* of *Immutability* and *Infallibility* are ascrib'd? Is this ² the funda-

A Summary of the present State of Reason, and our want of a Revelation.

¹ 2 Tim. ii. 26. ² Vid. Christianity as old, &c. 60, 61.

fundamental Law of the Universe, that can tell us more than Books or Masters, more than the *two Tables of Moses*, or the twelve *Tables of the Greeks*, and of which all other Laws are but Copies and Transcripts? Is this the only Principle that is allow'd us, to inform our Minds in all religious Truths, and direct our Conduct in all moral Actings? This the only Pilot, to steer our Course thro' the tempestuous World, in the midst of so many Dangers, Avocations, and Snares; with so many Lusts within, and Temptations without to carry us wrong; so many *Syrens* to allure us, so many Rocks to dash us, and so many Waves to *swallow us up quick*? Whether God, in this Method, would have made a sufficient Provision for Man's Salvation, we will not here Dispute; but, * to consider humane Reason, as it is in Fact, modified by the various Disabilities, Passions, and Prejudices, which will ever prevail among the greater Part of Mankind; and then consider every Man, left in this wild disconcerted State, without Rule or Guide, to search out Truth and Happiness by his own Collections; the Distractions and Perplexities which must needs ensue, would make every wise Man

* *Roger's Necessity of Divine Revelation.*

Man wish for some thing better : And if so, what can we imagine more desirable, more apposite to the wants of humane Nature in such a Case, than that God should interpose, and by an *authoritative* Declaration of his Will, instruct those, that were ignorant, and direct those that were going astray.

Since a divine Revelation therefore must at least be allow'd to be an eligible Thing to Man, and highly conducive to his Happiness, it may be worth our while to enquire,

1st. Whether it be equally consistent with the Notions we have of God that he should make one. And

2^{dly}, Of what particular Nature and Quality the *Christian* Revelation is, which we pretend he has actually made.

1st, If we may form a Judgment from the general Sense of Mankind, we shall hardly find any one, who believed the Existence of a God, and did not believe likewise some kind of Commerce and Communication between God and Man.

A Revelation consistent with the Attributes of God.

^b This was the Foundation of all the Religious Rites and Ceremonies, which every Nation pretended to receive from their Gods ; and, what gave Birth to their Arts of *Devination*, was the Persuasion, that their Gods had a per-

a perpetual Intercourse with Men, and, by various Means, gave them Intelligence of Things to come. And indeed 'tis hardly to be imagined, that God should make reasonable Creatures, on purpose to know him, and to be happy in the Knowledge, Love and Admiration of him, and yet withdraw himself from them, without giving them any other view of his Glory, than what they might perceive in the Reflection of his Creatures. Sin, 'tis own'd, has made a vast difference between God and us ; but, if we must live in the other World, and be happy or miserable there ; if he still exercises any Care and Providence over us ; or if he has any regard to his own Honour and Worship ; it seems reasonable to expect, that he should instruct us more perfectly in the Nature of his Will, than what any Reasoning of our own Minds, without such Instruction and Assistance, can possibly teach us.

Since therefore there was manifestly wanting a Divine Revelation, to relieve the Necessities of Men in their natural State ; and since no Man can presume to say, that it is inconsistent with any of the Attributes of God, or unbecoming the Wisdom of the Creator of all Things to supply that want, to reveal to his

Crea-

Creatures more fully the way of Happiness, and to make more particular Discoveries of his Will to them; nay, since, on the contrary, it seems much more suitable to our natural Notions of the Goodness and Mercy of God, as well as to the State, wherein he hath placed us, to suppose that he should do all this, rather than that he should not, it must needs follow, that his Goodness was all along inclined to make such a Revelation, whenever his infinite Wisdom should think fit: And therefore, since the Christian Religion has been offer'd to the World as a Divine Revelation.

2dly, Our next enquiry is, whether it comes up to this high Character, *i. e.* The Nature of the Christian Revelation. whether the Discoveries, which it has made, both in Relation to *Knowledge* and *Practice*, be suitable to the Attributes of God, and answerable to the Exigences of Man. Now if we reflect upon what has been said concerning the state of Mankind, before the coming of the *Gospel*, we cannot but perceive that they were strangely defective in their *Notions*, and grossly deprav'd in their *Manners*; and therefore, to effect a Reformation of both these, it was highly requisite, that a Religion, pretending to come from God, shou'd supply them with a *sufficient System* of all necessary *Truths*,

Truths, in order to inform their Minds, and with a *perfect Rule* of all necessary *Duties*, in order to direct their Lives: and 'tis by this *Criterion* that we desire to try the Merits of Christianity, both as to its *speculative* and *practical* part.

An Ob-
jection a-
gainst the
Mysteries
of the
Christian
Religion.

“ But as to the *speculative* part of
“ Christianity, *says the Enemy pre-*
“ *sently*, we have a little too much of
“ its Doctrines, which seem not a little
“ *Contradictory*, and *Mysteries*, that we
“ cannot comprehend, even tho’ you
“ say they are *reveal’d*. The Existence
“ of a God, the Dispensations of Provi-
“ dence, the Spirituality of our Souls,
“ a future State and future Judgment,
“ these are points, that we readily al-
“ low, because they are founded in the
“ nature of Things, and rise in the
“ Mind upon the Disquisitions of Rea-
“ son; but as for your Stories of the
“ *Trinity*, the Co-equality, Incarnation,
“ and Propitiation of *Jesus, &c.* of these
“ we can frame no manner of Concep-
“ tion, and therefore you must excuse
“ us, if we do not believe them. ^h *For*
“ *where is the Crime of not performing*
“ *Impossibilities*, or not believing what does
“ not appear to us to be true? What
“ worse Opinion can we have of the Di-
“ vine

^h Christianity as old, &c. p. 52.

“ *vine Goodness, than to imagine, that a*
 “ *mean denial of our Reason, or a wretch-*
 “ *ed Affectation of believing any point, too*
 “ *hard for our Understanding, can entitle*
 “ *us to his Favour ?*

It cannot be denied indeed, but that, Answer'd from the Consideration of the Things themselves.
 in the Christian Religion, there are many great *Mysteries*; or Doctrines of too much sublimity for the powers of Reason, unassisted by Revelation, to find out, or, when discovered, fully to comprehend; but this is no more than what we might reasonably expect, considering the nature and quality of the Things, it treats of. In its main Intendment, it is a kind of Comment upon the Divine Nature, or an Instrument to convey right Conceptions to the Soul of Man, as far as it is capable of receiving them. But now God, we know, is an *infinite* Being, without any Bounds or Limitations of his Essence; wonderful in his Actions, inconceivable in his Purposes, and inexpressible in his Attributes; and how can such vast and mighty Things be crouded in a little *finite* Understanding? How shall our poor, short Faculties be able to measure the *lengths* of his Eternity, the *breadth* and Expansions of his Immensity, the *heights* of his Prescience, the *depth* of his Decrees, and,

last of all, the unutterable, incomprehensible Mystery of two Natures *united* into one Person, and again of one and the same Nature diffus'd into a *triple Personality*? When a Man that is born Blind (asⁱ one expresses it) shall be able, on hear-say, to conceive in his Mind all the Varieties and Curiosities of Colours, or to draw an exact scheme of some fine City, or Map of some large Province, then may we expect, in this degenerate State of our Understanding, to comprehend the ways of the Almighty, and *by searching find out God*: but (to do Justice to the Argument on the other side) as it would be extremely foolish and irrational, for a blind Man to affirm, that there is no such thing as Colours, or Lines, or Pictures, because he finds that he cannot form in his Mind any true Perception of them; so would it be equally, if not superlatively more unreasonable, for us to deny the great Mysteries of our Faith, because the Plummet of our Reason will not reach them.

Which
are a proper
Subject for
our pre-
sent

Wish therefore we may, that Religion were less difficult to us, but, at the same time, we ought to remember that we wish away that, which, in reality, is Religion's present Commendation, as well as an ingredient of our future Happiness.
For,

For, ^k as it is easiness of access, that, many Times, lays a Man open to contempt, and a thorough Inspection into the secrets of any Object, that is apt to make us neglect it; so, to protect our Religion from rude Encroachments, by impressing an awe and reverential Fear upon our Minds, God has thought proper to hedge it in (as it were) with a *sacred* and majestick *Obscurity*, and, in some parts of it, to exhibit such sublime Truths as transcend the reach of human Wisdom; thereby to humble the pride and haughtiness of our Reason, and thereby to engage us in a closer and more diligent search into such Subjects, as will, every moment, furnish us with new matter to entertain the busiest Contemplation, even to the utmost period of human Life.

While therefore we continue in this State, we must be content ^{and future} ^{ture Con-} ^{templation.} ^{to know in} ^{part:} a full and adequate perception of the Mysteries of our Religion is reserv'd, as a principal Ingredient of our Felicity and Happiness above, when all the *heights* and *depths*, which we now stand amazed at, shall be made clear and familiar to us; when God shall display the hidden Glories of his *Nature*, the Wonders of his *Providence*, and the

G g 3

Wisdom

Wisdom of his *Counsels*; and, with all, fortify the Eye of the Soul to such a degree, as to make it able (as far as the Capacities of an human Intellect can be able) to behold and take them in.

A Distinction between things *above*, and things we must be careful *against* Reason.

To have a right notion of the Doctrines of our Religion however, we are to distinguish between those Things, that are *above Reason*, and incomprehensible, and those, that are *against Reason*, and utterly inconceivable. ^a Some things are above Reason, because of their transcendent Excellency and Distance from us; whereas those that are against Reason involve a Contradiction, and have a natural Repugnancy to our Understandings, which cannot conceive any thing that is formally impossible. And from hence it will follow, that tho' we neither can, nor shou'd believe those things, that are *contrary* to our Reason, yet we both may, and ought to believe those, that are *above* it: and the Reason is, ^b because the only evidence, we can give of our acknowledging the infallible truth of God, is by assenting to what he affirms upon his own Authority.

Why we ought to assent to the former, and why it is reasonable to expect such in a divine Revelation.

In assenting to a Proposition, whose Truth we perceive from the Reason of the Thing, we do not assent upon any Authority.

^a Bates's Harmony of Divine Attributes.

^b Rogers's Necessity of a Divine Revelation.

Authority at all. To such a Proposition we shou'd assent, tho' it were affirm'd by the most fallible Man, nay, tho' it were affirm'd by the most notorious Liar; and consequently, our assenting to such a Proposition is no manner of Proof, that we acknowledge the infallible Veracity of God. This can only appear by our assenting to a Proposition, whose Truth we do not perceive by any Evidence from the Nature of the Thing: For here we assent upon the simple Authority of God's Affirmation, and our assent is an explicit Acknowledgment of his absolute Veracity. If then it be reasonable to expect, in a Divine Revelation, that God shou'd require our Acknowledgment of this Attribute especially (and without such Acknowledgment no Revelation wou'd be of any use) and if this Acknowledgement can appear only by our assenting, upon the Authority of God, to such Propositions, as we cannot perceive the Truth of by any *internal* Evidence; it certainly cannot be incongruous to expect such Propositions in a Divine Revelation: nay, much more incongruous wou'd it be, and ^c a probable Objection against the Divinity of any Revelation, if we shou'd not find some Propositions of this kind

G g 4

in

^c *Law's Case of Reason.*

in it, because it is hardly conceivable, why God shou'd make an external Revelation of those Things only, which, by a due Exercise of an Reason, he has enabled us to find out.

Seeing it is so far from being unreasonable then, that it is highly *expedient*, and in some sort *necessary*, that there shou'd be some Propositions above the reach of human Understanding, in every Revelation, that comes from God; if we can but shew, that in the Christian System there are no Doctrines, but such as stand clear of all Absurdity and Contradiction, the more *abstruse* and mysterious they are, the more they deserve our belief, for this very Reason, because, ^d if what is reveal'd concerning God, were every way, easy, and adapted to our Comprehension, it cou'd never reach, nor, with any fitness, represent that Nature, which we all allow to be *incomprehensible*.

No Contradiction or Absurdity in any Doctrines of the Christian Revelation,

The Holy Scriptures, for instance, teach us, that, in the Divine Nature (which can be but *one*) there are *three* distinct *Persons*, to whom we ascribe the same Attributes and Perfections, the same Worship and Adoration. This indeed is a Doctrine above our Comprehension, as to the *manner*, how *three* shou'd

^d Young's Serm. Vol. II.

shou'd be *one*, and one three^e; but still we affirm, that there is no Contradiction in it, if we will but distinguish between *numbers*, and the *nature* of Things. For *three* to be *one* indeed is a Contradiction in numbers, but whether an infinite Nature can communicate itself to three different *Subsistences*, without such a Division, as is among created Beings, must not be determin'd by bare numbers, but by the absolute Perfections of the Divine Nature, which must be own'd to be above our Comprehension. The Holy Scriptures teach us, that the Son of God was *made Flesh*, and *dwelt amongst us*, and that therefore our Redeemer was both God and Man in one Person. This, we own, is, in its Nature, one of the great *Mysteries of Godliness*, as St. Paul calls it; but then we must remember, that, in reality, it is not much more difficult than the union of the Soul and Body in all Mankind, which, however unaccountable it may be to our Reason and Imagination, is too certain in fact, to be called in Question. Once more, the Holy Scriptures teach us, that our Saviour *Christ*, who was both God and Man in one Person, became the Redeemer of the World, by offering himself a *Propitiation to God for Sinners*. This,
in

in many respects, is a mystery too, and what we cou'd not have known, had it not been reveal'd to us ; but now, that it is reveal'd, 'tis far from deserving the Imputation of being *absurd*. ^d That all Mankind are Sinners, and fallen from their primitive Integrity, not only the Scriptures, but the constant Experience of our own irregular Appetites is but too convincing a Demonstration. Now since this was our Condition, and God was minded to rescue us from it, but 'entirely at Liberty in what method to effect it ; since the Soul of our Saviour Christ was a free *immaculate* Being, that might *voluntary* suffer for us, if he pleas'd, and, by the *dignity* of his Nature, enhance the value of his sufferings to the full pardon of our Sins, upon his Father's acceptance of a *vicarious* Sacrifice ; there appears nothing in this Doctrine of Christ's Satisfaction, (now that we have it fully reveal'd to us) but what corresponds with common Reason, and all *judicial* proceedings among Mankind.

but a
great
deal of
Majesty
and *Dig-*
nity in
them.

These are some of the principal Doctrines, that we (as Christians) profess ; and being they are free, when rightly considered, from all Appearance of Contradiction,

^d *Whiston's Essays.*

tradition, * we may appeal to the Judgment of any considerate Person, whether it be not for the *Dignity* and Advantage of Religion, that some Articles of it should exceed the largest humane Comprehension : whether we should entertain the same awful Impressions of the Divine Majesty, if the Perfections of his Nature and Operations were only such, as we could see to the end of : whether it does not raise the value of Man's Redemption, to have it brought about by Miracles of Mercy, not only without Example, but even beyond our present Understanding. Had all these Things been less, we should indeed have known them *better* ; but then so much as we abate of their *Mysteriousness*, to bring them down to our Capacity, so much we impair their *Dignity*, and weaken the Power of them upon our Affections. It is therefore the very Commendation (as we said before) and Excellency of these Doctrines, that they are so *far above us* ; and we ought to esteem it an Instance of the Divine Goodness, no less than Wisdom, so to have temper'd his Revelations, that we want no Knowledge, enough to engage our *Piety* and *Holy Wonder*, and yet have not so much, as should destroy our *Humility*

* Stanhope's Serm.

mility and *Godly Reverence*; and, upon the whole, have Reason to believe, that it could not have been better, nay probably not near so well, if either less had been *discovered* to us, or less *concealed* from us.

I have insisted the longer upon such Doctrines, as are purely *Christian*, and not discoverable by the Light of Nature, in order to make it appear, that, for good and weighty Causes, they were inserted in the Christian System; that, upon due Consideration, they are far from being disagreeable to sound and unprejudiced Reason; and, consequently, that they little deserve the Contempt and Ridicule, that some, in their Writings, have neither been ashamed, nor afraid to put upon them.

The moral Tendency of the more obvious Doctrines of Christianity.

The other Doctrines, which, in some measure, were discoverable by the Strength of Reason, but have been set in full Light, and cleared of all their Ambiguity and Doubtfulness by the Revelation of the Gospel; such as that of the Being of a God, the Inspection of his Providence, the supreme End of Man, the Immortality of his Soul, the Resurrection of his Body, a future Judgment, and an eternal State of Happiness or Misery hereafter, are so *rational* in themselves, and have so natural a

Ten-

Tendency to what is the great End of all Religion, the Reformation of Mens Lives and Tempers, that a very small Illustration will suffice to recommend them. For

^f What can be a more necessary and excellent Foundation of true Religion, than that Doctrine, which the Christian Religion clearly and distinctly teaches us, concerning the Nature and Attributes of *the only true God, who inhabits Eternity, and yet humbleth himself to behold the Things that are in Heaven and Earth?* What can afford more Comfort and Security in all Conditions of Life, than the Sense of a *Providence* (by which the very ^g *Hairs of our Head are numbered*) concerning it self for our Welfare; and, for that Reason, bidding us ^h *to be careful for nothing, but, in every thing, by Prayer and Supplication, with Thanksgiving, to make our Requests known unto God?* What can be a more effectual Means to wean us from the Love of the World, and the Allurements of Sin, than to consider, that the proper and ultimate End of Man is the Fruition of God, and that, though ⁱ *it does not yet appear what we shall be, yet this we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be*

^f Clarke's Evidence. ^g Matt. x. 30. ^h Phil. iv. 6.
ⁱ 1 Joh. iii. 2.

be like him, for we shall see him as he is? What a greater Incitement to Purity and Holiness, to Love and Hope, and Heavenly-mindedness, than the Assurance given us in the Gospel, that, when we are ^k dissolved, we shall immediately *be with Christ*; that ^l *this Corruptible shall put on Incorruption, and this Mortal put on Immortality*; that our Souls, when they go hence, *return to the God that gave them*, and our Bodies, when laid in the Dust, after a short Repose, are to be *raised in Power, and ^m fashioned like unto Christ's glorious Body*? In fine, what stronger and more powerful Motive to deter us from Vice, and allure us to all kind of Virtue, than the Discovery we have of God's having appointed a Day, wherein he will judge the World in Righteousness, ⁿ and render unto every Man according to his Works; to them, who by patient Continuance in well-doing, seek for Glory, and Honour, and Immortality, eternal Life; but unto them, that are Contentious, and obey not the Truth, but obey Unrighteousness, Indignation, and Wrath; Tribulation and Anguish upon every Soul of Man that doeth Evil. So that the Articles of our Christian Faith, you see, are far from being
arbitrary

^k Phil. i. 23. ^l 1 Cor. xv. 54. ^m Phil. iii. 21.
ⁿ Rom. ii. 7, &c.

arbitrary Impositions, ° calculated for the Exercise of our *Credulity*, or the Gratification of our idle Curiosity, but have an immediate Relation to Practice. They are indeed the genuine Principles and Foundations of all *humane* and *divine* Virtues; and, ¶ taken all together, make a far more rational and consistent *Scheme of Belief*, than what the wisest antient Philosopher ever thought of, or the most *opiniative* Modern Unbeliever ever yet contrived.

But besides these Doctrines, there are two *Ordinances*, peculiar to the Christian Religion, which have an equal Tendency to Practice, and are so far from being ¶ *vain* or *superstitious*, that they carry their own Plea and Justification along with them. For what reasonable Man can pretend to say, that it is any way *superstitious*, for every Member of the Society to be solemnly admitted into his Profession, by a plain and significant Rite, intitling him to all the Privileges, and charging him with all the Obligations, which belong to the Members of that Society, as such? which is the Design of one of the Sacraments: Or that it is unreasonable or superstitious, for Men frequently to commemorate,

The Reasonableness of the Christian Sacraments.

° Archbishop Sharp's Serm. ¶ Clarke's Evidence.

¶ Vid. *Christianity as Old, &c.* c. 11.

rate, with all Thankfulness, the love of their greatest Benefactor, and humbly and solemnly to renew their Obligations, and Promises of Obedience to him? which is the Design of the other. 'Tis a known Practice among Men, ^r that *Covenants* are not entered into without the Formality of Witnesses, of Hands, Seals, and Delivery, in solemn and express Words: And if Men know themselves too well, to trust one another without this Solemnity, it may reasonably be expected, that when God is pleased to permit them to enter into Covenant with him, he should not receive them under less Obligations of Caution and Security for their Integrity, than they are wont to use among one another; since every Breach of Covenant with him is infinitely more affronting and sinful, than any Breach of Covenant with Man can possibly be. And as these *outward Signs* do serve to raise our Attention, to fix our Minds, and put us in Remembrance, that Heaven and Earth, Angels and Men are *Witnesses* against us, if we prove treacherous and unfaithful in this Covenant; so are they *Tokens* and *Pledges* to us of God's Love and Favour, and give us *sensible* and *visible* Assurances of

^r *Jenkin's* Reasonableness of Christianity.

of that Grace, which is *invisible* and *spiritual*.

'Tis not a little in the Nature and Temper of Man, to be better pleased and contented with something present, and in Hand (though of small Value in it self) as a *Token* and *Pledge* of what is made over to him; than with the greatest Promises and Protections, without any Thing, as an *earnest*, to confirm them. Now what is *inward* and *invisible* is *absent* as to *Sense*, and what is *future* stands in need of something *present* to represent it to us: And therefore God, in Compliance to our Infirmities, and in Assistance to our Faith, has been pleased, for our farther Comfort and Trust in him, to appoint *visible Signs* and *Pledges* of that, which is *invisible*, and to give to our very Senses such Assurance, as they are capable of, that all the Promises of his *spiritual* Blessings shall as certainly be fulfilled to us, as the *outward* Signs and Pledges, which he hath appointed, are duly received by us.

It may be suggested perhaps, "That
 " these Things making so deep an
 " Impression upon the common People
 " is a just Reason against their use in
 " Religion, because the *vulgar*, who
 " generally look no farther than *Exter-*

An Objection
 against them.

See Vid. Christianity as Old, &c. p. 173.

H h

" nals,

“ nals, conceive in them I know not
 “ what *internal* Holiness, and think such
 “ *symbolical* Representations as necessa-
 “ ry, as the Things represented by them;
 “ nay, by Degrees forgetting the Rea-
 “ son of their Institution, come to Ido-
 “ lize them, as the *Israelites* did the
 “ *brazen Serpent*.

Answer'd
 by shew-
 ing that
 they are
 secur'd a-
 gainst su-
 perstitious
 Abuse.

But if it should be granted that some have erroneous Notions concerning these *positive* Institutions, so as to lay an equal Stress upon them, as upon Morality it self; nay, that some have resolved the whole of Religion into such Observances, and, instead of making it consist in the necessary Duties of Piety, Justice, and Charity, have placed it, not only in the instituted Means appointed by God, but in trifling Ceremonies, and incomprehensible Mysteries of Man's inventing and imposing; yet what avail-eth all this? The Question is not, whether the most *excellent* Things in the World may not, by one means or other, be *corrupted*, but whether the Scriptures give Countenance to any such Corruption; not whether Men have been mistaken in their Apprehensions of these Things, but whether Revelation has not laid down very plain Rules, to prevent such Mistakes; by declaring, that instituted Rites have no Sanctity in them,
 and

and are no better than any the most useleſs and trifling Ceremonies, if they do not promote moral Goodneſs: And, conſequently, whether the common People (if they would uſe their Reaſon) might not eaſily avoid ſuch groundleſs and ſuperſtitious Conceits. ^u *Bring no more vain Oblations; Incenſe is an Abomination unto me; the New Moons and Sabbaths, the Calling of Aſſemblies, I cannot away with; it is Iniquity even the ſolemn Meeting. He that killeth an Ox, is, as if he ſlew a Man; he that ſacrificeth a Lamb, as if he cut off a Dog's Neck; he that burneth Incenſe, as if he bleſſed an Idol; and the Reaſon is, becauſe they have choſen their own ways, and their Soul delighteth in their Abomination.* Such was God's Rejection of the Ordinances of his own Inſtitution under the Law: And, in like manner, we are told in the Goſpel, that ^w *He, who eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh Damnation to himſelf, not diſcerning the Lord's Body; and that it is not the ^x putting away the Filth of the Fleſh, i. e. the external Part of Baptiſm, for which we are conſidered as good Chriſtians, but the answer of a good Conſcience towards God.*

H h 2 Theſe

^u Foſter's Uſefulneſs and Truth of the Chriſtian Revelation. Iſa. i. 13. Iſa. lxvi. 3. ^w 1 Cor. xi. 29. ^x 2 Pet. iii. 21.

These and many more of the like Nature are the plain Declarations of Scripture; and whoever retains these in his mind can be in no great danger of idolizing the *Symbolical* Representations of the Things, commemorated in such Ordinances.

And capable of exciting many Virtues and good Dispositions in us.

Since these Ordinances however, when rightly observ'd, are productive of so many Virtues and good Dispositions in us; since, in the Sacrament of *Baptism*^a, we profess our sincere belief in the Truth of that Doctrine, which God the *Father* reveal'd by his blessed *Son*, and confirm'd by the miraculous Operation of the *holy Ghost*; in it declare our humble Acceptance of the Overtures of Mercy and Grace, purchased for us by our Saviour, and in this Sacrament exhibited to us; in it acknowledge our Obligation to all Piety, Righteousness, and Sobriety, as loyal Subjects, faithful Servants, and dutiful Children to God; and, lastly, in it devote our selves to the Faith and Obedience of God the *Father*, our great and glorious *Maker*; of God the *Son*, our good and gracious *Redeemer*; and of God the *holy Ghost*, our blessed Guide and *Comforter*: And, in like manner, since a devout Reception of the *Supper of the Lord*, Exercises and Excites in us an awful Sense of Mind,

^a Barrow on the Sacrament.

Mind, answerable to the Greatness and Holiness of him, whom at that time we approach; an hearty Contrition for our Sins, which expos'd our Saviour to such Pains and Agonies, as are therein remember'd; and a firm Resolution of forsaking them entirely, as injurious and displeasing to him; a fervent Love and Gratitude to our dear Redeemer, for his wonderful goodness and love to us; a deep humility, upon the sense of our Unworthiness to receive such Testimonies of his Favour; a pious Joy, in Consideration of the excellent fruits accruing to us from his Performances; a comfortable hope of obtaining the benefits of his Passion by the assistance of his Grace; and lastly, an enlarg'd Good-will and Charity to all our Brethren, as being made heirs of the same Hope, and not only washed in the same Baptism, but fed at the same Table with ourselves: Since these, I say, are the Graces and Benefits, which accrue to us by these holy Ordinances, we have too just a Sense of our Happiness in their Institution, to be so far disgusted against those, who have clog'd and abused them with superstitious Innovations, as to listen to the Insinuations of others, who would deprive us of their Comfort, by having all *outward* Worship abolish'd.

H h 3

“ But,

“ But, be the Sacraments of Christia-
 “ nity what they will, we matter not ^b;
 “ the main of Religion lies chiefly in its
 “ *moral* Part; and yet we can, by no
 “ Means, conceive, that its Rules of this
 “ kind give it any just pretence to the
 “ Character of a *Divine Revelation*, or its
 “ Author, to that of a *Prophet sent from*
 “ *God*, since it has informed us of no
 “ more, than what the Improvements
 “ of natural Reason had concluded be-
 “ fore, and the Philosophy of Pagans
 “ taught, in a more accurate Method
 “ and Digestion.

Christia-
 nity much
 more ex-
 tensive,
 even in
 its moral
 part, than
 any Dis-
 coveries
 of human
 Reason.

Whether the Christian Morality not
 being digested under proper Heads may
 be any valid Objection against it, I can-
 not tell; 'tis certain, that, whether the
 Spirit of God might concern itself with
 such Niceties or no, its being wrote by
 several Persons, in distant Places, and at
 different Times, could not, in the course
 of Things, admit of such *Methodicalness*,
 without some violent Suspicions of a For-
 gery: but this we may adventure to say,
 that the substance of all the wise Pre-
 cepts, which were ever deliver'd by any
 Philosopher of any Sect, is, not only more
 plainly laid down by our Saviour and
 his Apostles, but enforced likewise with
 greater

^b Vid. Christianity as old, &c. *Pessim.*

^c Clark's Evidence.

greater Efficacy and Strength, founded upon nobler and more consistent Principles, urg'd with greater weight and authority, and pressed with more powerful and affecting Arguments, (besides a considerable number of new Commandments which never came into the Catalogue of Heathen Virtues,) than all his Sagacity and Strength of reasoning cou'd ever invent. For, where do we find the true Use and Government of our Passions, and Desires, and Affections so justly stated; where the great Lessons of Humility, Patience, and Contentedness so fully taught; where a generous contempt of the World, and ardent Aspirations after Heaven, so powerfully recommended, as in the Christian Philosophy? Where is the heroick Rule of *overcoming evil with good*, by *loving our Enemies, blessing those that curse, and praying for those that persecute us*; where the Precepts, necessary in this deprav'd State, of voluntary Restraints and Inflictions, such as the Scripture calls *taking up the Cross*, and of striving and running, and earnestly contending towards Perfection, once mention'd but in the Gospel? In short, our Saviour has done more towards the Reformation of the World, the Extinction of Sin, and the Establish-

H h 4

ment

^f Rom. xii. 21.

^b Mat. v. 44.

ment of true Holiness; more to inspire Mens Minds with great and magnanimous Virtue; and to give them an absolute conquest over all their vicious Appetites; to enlarge their Understandings, and emancipate their Wills, and repair in them the decay'd Image of God, than the best Philosophers have own'd their Instructions were ever able to do. Add to this the *Motives*, whereby our Saviour enforces the Practice of his Laws, *viz.* the promise of divine and supernatural *Assistance*, to help our Infirmities; of *pardon* upon true Repentance, to cure our despondence; and of an everlasting *recompence* of Reward, to encourage our endeavours; all *such*, as the heathen World was but slenderly acquainted with, tho' highly becoming the Wisdom and Goodness of God, and the natural Exigences of Man: Add again, that the Considerations, upon which he requires our Obedience, and discourages our breach of his Commandments, are not the common stale Topicks of *Convenience* and *Inconvenience*, but (what the Wit of Man never once thought of before) the Method of God's dealing with us, the great Example of our Lord and Master, the respect we owe to our holy Profession, the Relation, which, while

while we are in this World, we bear to Heaven, and the Influence, which our Regard, to these Duties will have upon our future State; whereupon we are enjoin'd, *to forgive one another, even as God, for Christs sake, has forgiven us;* ^k *to let the same Mind be in us, that was in Christ Jesus;* ^l *to walk worthy of the Vocation, wherewith we are called;* ^m *to let our Conversation be in Heaven,* ⁿ *because we are Strangers and Pilgrims upon Earth;* and to practice ^o *Meekness, because it in the sight of God is of great price;* ^p *Mercifulness, because 'tis the Means to obtain Mercy;* ^q *Purity of Heart, as a necessary Preparation to the seeing God;* ^r *Humility, as entitling us to the Kingdom of Heaven;* ^s *Charity, as laying up in store for ourselves a good Foundation against the time to come;* and ^t *Patience, and Perseverance in well-doing, because our light Affliction, which is but for a Moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory:* putting all this together, I say, let any impartial Man judge, whether a Revelation of this Character be no more, than a Republication of the Law of Nature; no more,

^k Phil. ii. 5. ^l Eph. iv. 1. ^m Phil. ii. 20. ⁿ 1 Pet. ii. 11. ^o 1 Pet. iii. 4. ^p Mat. v. 7. ^q Mat. v. 8. ^r Mat. v. 3. ^s 1 Tim. iv. 18, 19. ^t 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18.

more, than what the *Pagans* of old have taught us; and no more, than what any Man of good Penetration might now collect, and form into a regular System, by a proper Exercise of his Faculties, and a due Attention to the bare light of Reason; whether a Revelation, in short, that recommends to our Practice, (and that from Motives and Considerations, strong and engaging, and such as were never heard of before,) *whatsoever Things are true, whatsoever Things are honest, whatsoever Things are just, whatsoever Things are pure, whatsoever Things are lovely, whatsoever Things are of good report, be not worthy of all Acceptation, as exhibiting the plainest Marks of a divine Original.*

A review
of the
whole Ar-
gument.

And now to recollect what has been offer'd on this Subject. Since, *in the first place*, the Religion of Nature (how sufficient soever it may be supposed for the conduct of our first Parents, in their state of Innocence) was not, *even then*, in itself *absolutely Perfect*, and is far from deserving that Character *now*: Since Mankind are confessedly fallen from their *Original Rectitude*, and labour under a manifest Weakness and Depravation, insomuch that their boasted Knowledge is little more, at *first*, than the Result of their Education, and, all their

their Lives long, a Principle as capable of Error, as it is of Truth, and as productive of Vice, as it is of Virtue in them: since human Reason, in its highest point of *Improvement*, is perfectly unable to settle a proper Rule of *Religion* and *Morality*; for as much as the greatest Philosophers were at a loss how to devise an *acceptable* form of Divine Worship, and how to attain a *Reconciliation* with God, whenever they had offended him by their Sins; and, (considering the Carelessness and Inattention, the Passions and Prejudices, as well as the supposed Equality and Self-conceit of most Men) in no Condition to instruct the World either by Argument, or by their own Authority: And lastly, since it is true *in Fact*, that the greatest Men in the Heathen World were entirely ignorant of some of the most fundamental Points, and very doubtful and uncertain in all the rest; were over-run with Wickedness themselves, and too eager asserters of many vicious and corrupt Principles, (enough this to humble the Pride and arrogant Pretensions of our *modern* Unbelievers) it must needs follow, that a more perfect Revelation of the Divine Will, than what could be collected from the bare Light of Nature, could not but be a very desirable thing to Man, in his State of Ignorance and Defection,
And,

And, since *again* it is not only agreeable to the State and Condition of Man, but highly consistent with the Attributes of God, for him to vouchsafe a Revelation to his own Creatures, in order to lighten the Darkneſs of their Underſtandings, and reform the Irregularity of their Lives; for which the Chriſtian Religion is peculiarly adapted, as containing a moſt compleat Rule of Faith and Manners: Since, in this Religion, there are Doctrines of different kinds, ſome that are *myſterious*, and paſt Man's finding out, and others more *obvious*, and diſcoverable by the Light of Reaſon; the more obvious (as they have a natural Tendency to promote all kind of Virtue and Godlineſs in us) *upon their own Account* deſerving our Reception; and the myſterious (as they are no more than what might be expected in a ſupernatural Revelation, and only become *ſuch*, by the Sublimity of the Subjects, they treat on, which, notwithstanding, imply no Abſurdity or Contradiction in them, but tend manifeſtly to the Credit and Advantage of the whole Diſpenſation) *upon the Authority of God*, and in Acknowledgment of his Veracity, requiring our Aſſent: Since the *poſitive* Inſtitutions of this holy Religion are not only requiſite to our *Initiation*

tiation and Confirmation in it, but Pledges likewise of God's Love, and visible Assurances of *spiritual* Blessings to us; no ways liable to any *superstitious* Abuse from those, that attend to the Precepts of Scripture concerning them; and in such, as devoutly observe them, capable of exciting all manner of good Affections and Dispositions: And, lastly, since the moral Part of this Religion contains many more *Laws* and Precepts, and these established by more powerful *Motives* and Sanctions, and enforced with more sublime *Reasons* and Considerations, than ever the World had heard of before; it will necessarily follow, that Christians, of all other Men, if they are but mindful of these high Privileges, and ^x *study to adorn the Doctrine* of their Lord and Master in all things, are in a very happy Situation, ^y *through the tender Mercy of our God, whereby the Day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give Light to them that sit in Darkness, and in the Shadow of Death, to guide our Feet in the Way of Peace.*

^x Tit. ii. 10.

^y Luke i. 78, 79.



S E C T. XXIV.

Of the Date, and Efficacy of the Christian Dispensation.

The Ob-
jection.

“ B U T if this Religion is a Dis-
 “ pensation of so excellent a Na-
 “ ture, as to teach many more saving
 “ Doctrines, for the enlightening of the
 “ Understanding, and prescribe many
 “ more wholesome Laws, for the Re-
 “ gulation of human Life, than the
 “ deepest Re-searches of Philosophy
 “ could ever attain; ^a how comes it to
 “ pass, that it was not discovered
 “ sooner, or that it is not now commu-
 “ nicated to *all*? The Notion, we have
 “ of God’s universal *Benevolence*, would
 “ tempt us to think, that a Remedy of
 “ this *sovereign* Nature should immedi-
 “ ately, and as soon as there was Occa-
 “ sion for it, have been equally dis-
 “ pensed to all his Children, since all
 “ had corrupted themselves, and had
 “ an equal need of it. ’Tis inconsistent
 “ with the Character of God, who is
 “ *no Respector of Persons*, but *beholdeth*
 “ *all*

^a *Vid.* Christianity as old, &c. c. 14. *Passim.*

“ *all the Dwellers upon Earth* without
 “ Partiality and Prejudice, to be good
 “ and merciful to a few only, but cruel
 “ and unmerciful to the rest. If he
 “ acts always for the good of his Crea-
 “ tures, what Reason can be assign’d,
 “ why he should not, from the Begin-
 “ ning, have discovered such things, as
 “ make for their Good, since the sooner
 “ this was made, the greater would his
 “ Goodness be; whereas, upon the
 “ Supposition, that Christianity has all
 “ this Perfection in it, it cannot be de-
 “ nied, but that God left all Mankind
 “ for 4000 Years together, and even
 “ to this Day, the far greater Part of
 “ them, destitute of sufficient Means to
 “ perform their Duty, and preserve
 “ themselves from sinking into a cor-
 “ rupt and degenerate State; which
 “ cannot but bear hard upon his Justice
 “ and Mercy; supposing, I say, that
 “ Christianity has all this Perfection in
 “ it: But, according to the present Ap-
 “ pearance of things, it seems to have
 “ no such Virtue; nor can it be esteemed
 “ a proper Remedy to the Corruptions
 “ of Mankind, when its Effect is so lit-
 “ tle seen in Experience. For what
 “ impartial Man, who has compared
 “ the former and present Condition of
 “ Mankind, can think the World much
 “ mended

“ mended since the Time of *Tiberius* ;
 “ or, tho’ ever so well versed in Church-
 “ History, can, from the Conduct of
 “ Christians, find that they are arriv’d
 “ to any higher State of Perfection, than
 “ the rest of Mankind, who are suppos’d
 “ to continue in their Degeneracy and
 “ Corruption?”

Answer-
 ed, by
 shewing,
 that a Re-
 velation
 from God
 to some
 more
 than o-
 thers is
 consonant
 to his
 Works of
 Creation
 and Pro-
 vidence.

It would but badly become us, who have such imperfect Notions of the Things, *that are before us*, to pry into the *Counsels* of the *Almighty*; but there are certain hints, which may be gather’d from the Works of his *Creation* and *Providence*, to teach us the Reasons of his other Dispensations. ’Tis allow’d on all Hands, that God^h, for the greater display of his Goodness, has very wisely created distinct *Orders* of intelligent Beings, one above another ; and, consequently, that there is a very great Inequality between the several Parts of the *moral* Creation. Every one, that looks into the World, will find, that Men have not, only vastly different Capacities for discovering the Obligations of true Religion and Morality, but that their Opportunities and Advantages likewise are different. Some not only enjoy greater Strength of Reason, but are much more likely (if their

Faculties
 Foster’s Usefulness of the Christian Revelation.

Faculties were but equal) considering the Circumstances, in which they are placed, to form righter Notions about these important Points, than others : and, if the Rectitude of human Nature consists in the Practice of Virtue, these Persons certainly enjoy better *Means*, and more favourable Opportunities, of pursuing their *supreme* rational Happiness, than those, whose Knowledge, and, consequently, whose Practice of Religion and Morality is corrupted and depraved by false and dishonourable Notions of God, and by a low and extravagant Superstition. Now, as there is apparently a Diversity of *Beings*, and, among Beings of the same Species, a Diversity of *Gifts* and Capacities, of Administrations and Means, in the rational System ; why may not the great Governor of the World make the same, or a greater Difference between Mankind by a particular Revelation, granting it to some, and denying it to others, as is most visibly and constantly made in the common Course of his Providence ?

A Revelation, in short, is a voluntary Favour and Donation of God, which, however we may wish or desire, we have no Right to claim and demand ; and therefore, as God is not oblig'd to
 I i make

Is no Instance of
 God's
 Partiality;

make all his Creatures equal, to make Men Angels, and endow them with the same Faculties and Capacities ; so neither is he bound to make all Men capable of the same Degree, or of the same kind of Happiness ; or afford all Men the same Means and Opportunities of obtaining it. For we mistake the Matter much, if we think, ^d that the *Impartiality* of God consists in treating all his Creatures, even of the same Species, alike. It does not stint him in the free Distribution of his Favours, wherein he may act with what Variety, and make what Difference, he pleases ; but it regards chiefly, if not altogether, the *Execution* of Justice : and the most that it supposes is, that God is equally desirous, that all Men should obtain that Happiness, which is suitable to their particular Stations, Capacities, and Circumstances ; and that, in Quality of their Governor and Judge, he has given them sufficient Means to know and practise all, that he requires of them ; and will equally favour and reward the equally sincere (whatever the Difference of their Advantages be) in Proportion to their Improvements and Services.

Tho', a
Token of
extraord-
inary Fa-
vour to
us.

Had we indeed any reason to think,
e that God would judge Men for the
Trans-

^d *Foster's Usefulness.* ^e *Bp of Lond. 2d. Past. Let.*

Transgression of any Duty, which they did not, and could not, know to be their Duty; and that he would make them accountable for not, being influenced by Motives, that he had never laid before them; this would make it difficult to reconcile such a Proceeding with the divine Justice. But, since the contrary to this is true; since it is indisputably certain, that he will not punish Men for their invincible Ignorance; surely he is at liberty to dispence his *extraordinary* Favours, at what times, and in what Measures; to what Nations, and to what Persons, he thinks fit. ^f For *may not he do what he will with his own?* and *why should our Eye be evil, because he is good?* Why should we murmur or complain, that he raises us to greater Degrees of Perfection, in order to advance us to greater Degrees of Happiness and Glory? And what a provoking Instance of Perverseness is it, to refuse his Favours, for the very Reason, which ought to encrease our Thankfulness for them, namely, that he vouchsafes them to us, and not to others?

But after all, it must be acknowledg'd, ^{And all along directed by his Foreknowledge of what is best.} that a divine Revelation is not owing to the Justice or free Goodness of God, either *seperately* or *jointly* consider'd, but

I i 2

^f Matth. xx. 15. ^g Law' Case of Reason.

to the Goodness, Mercy, and Justice of God, governed and directed by his eternal *Fore-knowledge* of all the Effects, which any Revelation, at any time, can have. For God ordains a Revelation in this or that Manner, Time, and Place, not because it is a Justice, that he cannot refuse ; not because it is a Matter of Favour and free Goodness, and therefore may be given, or with-holden at Pleasure ; but because he has the whole Duration of humane Things, the whole Race of Mankind, the whole Order of humane Chances and Events, the whole Combination of all Causes and Effects of humane Tempers, all the Actions of Free-agents, and all the Consequences of every Revolution, plainly in his Sight ; and according to this eternal Fore-knowledge, every Revelation receives every thing that is particular in it. He shews his Goodness in a Revelation to *this part* of the World, for Instance, not because it is a part, that alone wants it ; not because he can bestow his Favours, as he pleases ; but because, by acting in this manner with such a *part*, he best shews his Kindness and Regard to the *whole*. And in like manner he reveals himself at *such a time*, not because he, at that time, begins to have a *partial* and particular Kindness, but

but because, by so *timing* his Goodness, he best shews his Care and Concern for Mankind, throughout the whole Duration of humane Things, from the beginning to the end of the World.

Now if, by the particular Time and Manner of any Revelation, the whole Race of Mankind receive more benefit from it; if more are raised to Happiness by it, and fewer are made miserable by a blameable use or refusal of it, than could have happened by any other time, or manner of giving it to the World, consistent with the natural Freedom of Men; then is God, by being *particular* in the Time, and Place of giving it, not *merciful to a few*, and *cruel to many*, but is most merciful to all: because he only chose such Time, and Place, and Persons, as, in his eternal Wisdom, he knew would be beneficial to the whole Race of Mankind, more than any other.

'Tis a long Space of Time, we may think, for the World to lie in such a State of Darkness, as we have represented, without any Divine Interposition; but then we are to consider, that the Succession and Continuance of time is not, to an infinite and eternal Mind, what we compute it. & *One Day with*

Tho' time is of no consideration with God, yet, in all Ages, he made some kind of discoveries of himself to the Gentile World.

the Lord is as a thousand Years, and a thousand Years as one Day, is a Position, which the Apostle desires some People *not to be Ignorant of*, when they seem'd uneasy at Christ's *delaying his coming to Judgment*: and, in like manner, tho' the Compass of 4000 Years and upwards, from the fall of *Adam* to the coming of Christ, be a prodigious Space, in our Imagination; yet, to him, who has all Eternity in his view, *a thousand Years are but as Yesterday, when it is past, and as a Watch in the Night.*

Had there indeed been no Provision made for Man's Information during this *Interval*, but the bare Light of Nature, which soon became obscur'd, some Imputations might then fall upon God's *providential* Care, which would not so easily be removed: but since he all along made such Discoveries of himself to the *Patriarchs*, both before and after the Flood, as they were concerned to transmit to their Posterity, there cannot any want of a sufficient Supply of Knowledge be chargeable upon God; nor was there that Necessity for a standing Revelation then, when the Longevity of Mankind (^h for *Adam* himself lived 930 Years, with whom *Methuselah* was contemporary

^g Psal. xciv. 4 ^h *Waterland's* Scripture vindicated, Part 2d, in the Postscript.

temporary 243, and with him *Noah* 600, and *Shem* 100 Years) gave a better Sanction and Authority to *Tradition*. After the Flood, *Noah*, who lived till within two Years of the Birth of *Abraham*; and *Shem*, who lived till *Isaac* was fifty Years old, had fresh Revelations given them; and the Religion of those Times was a Mixture of *natural* and *revealed* Precepts, and their Sanctions. Upon his Call, *Abraham* became the great Reviver and Restorer both of natural and revealed Religion, by himself and his Issue, and by his Nephew *Lot*, and his Issue, which, in Process of Time, grew up to many and great Nations. During this Period, the holy Penman records two Persons of the *Gentile* World, *Job* and *Melchisedeck* (and perhaps his Father-in-Law *Jethro* may be reckoned a *third*) Men of Renown for their Knowledge and Worship of the true God. Upon giving of the Law, the *Jews* became, as it were, a *burning and shining Light* to the rest of the World; and, by the Providence of God in all his Dispensations to that People, effectual Care was taken, that all the necessary Points of Religion, which concerned Mankind in general, should by them be communicated to the rest of

the World. In the Time of *Joshuah*, and sometime after, the Wars of *Canaan* carried in them such *visible* marks of a Divine Power on the side of *Israel*, as serv'd to spread the Fame of the true God in all the Nations round about. In the time of *David*, the *Jews* grew a powerful People, and the Exploits of their King were crown'd with an uncommon Success, with an intent (as himself tells us) ^k *to declare the Glory of God among the Heathen, his Wonders among all People*. In the Time of *Solomon*, the Fame of the true God was so diffus'd all around, that we find not only ^l the Queen of *Sheba*, who came from the *East* to hear the Wisdom of *Solomon*, but *Hiram* King of *Tyre* likewise ^m *blessing the Lord God of Israel, who made Heaven and Earth*. Upon the Division of the ten Tribes, and the Erection of the Kingdom of *Israel*, distinct from that of *Judah*, the many Leagues and Wars, which these two Kingdoms had with the Kings of *Egypt*, *Syria*, *Babylon*, and other Nations, cou'd not but exceedingly conduce to the Propagation of the true Religion, and gave the Prophets an Opportunity of working their Miracles among the Heathen. ⁿ The Captivity of the *Jews*,
for

^k Psal. xciv. 3. ^l 1 Kings ii. 9. ^m 2 Chron. ii. 12. ⁿ *Jenkin's Reasonableness*.

for seventy Years, in *Babylon* made their Religion almost as well known there as in *Jerusalem* itself; and for this Reason we find it recommended by several publick *Edicts*, and all the People, under that large Empire, commanded ° to tremble and fear before the God of Daniel, for he is the only living God, and stedfast for ever. The Restoration of the *Jews* by *Cyrus*, who had been so long before appointed, and named by God himself for that Work, and his peculiar Favour to them, which raised their repute among other Nations, was ordained for this very end, P that they might know, from the rising of the Sun, and from the West, that there is no God besides him, who created all Things.

Lower than this I might descend, and observe, how the *Jews* were dispersed all the World over; how the Scriptures were translated into a Language generally understood; how *Proselytes* flow'd into them in prodigious Numbers every where; and how they, and their God, and their Religion, came to be known to the *Grecian*, and *Roman*, tho' not in so conspicuous a manner, as before to the *Egyptian*, *Babylonian*, and *Persian* Empires. What I have said is sufficient to satisfy every sober Enquirer, that, in every Age, from the beginning

° Dan. vi. 25.

P Isa. xlv. 6.

ginning of time to the Commencement of *Christianity*, Men were not left to mere natural Light, but had frequent Opportunities, by one providential Means or other, of coming to the knowledge of God's true Religion and Virtue.

That
there was
all along
a Covenant
between
God and
Man,

But suppose this not to be the Case, but that, instead of such ample Discoveries, a thick Cloud of Darkness in a manner totally over-spread the Heathen World; yet the Scriptures have given us a Reason, why God should ^a *wink at these times of Ignorance, and suffer all Nations to walk in their own Ways*, without the Interposition of a standing Revelation, in calling Christ, ^b *the Mediator of the new Covenant, and the Lamb, that was slain from the Foundation of the World*: for this intimates to us, that there was all along a Covenant between him and his Father concerning the Redemption of Mankind; that, upon the Fore-knowledge of their Transgression, Christ undertook to be their Mediator, and engaged, as their Proxy, to come down upon the Earth, to assume human Nature, to fulfil the Law, which they should violate, and to satisfy God's Justice, by offering his Blood a Sacrifice for their Sins; that, until the Time should come for Christ to execute this

Engage-

^a Acts xiv. 16.

^b Heb. ix. 15. Rev. xiii. 8.

Engagement, all these Things should be look'd upon as *actually* done; his Humiliation effected, his Bloodshed, God's Justice satisfied, and Man in a state of Reconciliation with him: consequently, that there was a Saviour of the World, even before the World began, a constant Mediator between God and Man, a standing Propitiation for Sin, and a daily Intercessor at God's Right-hand, whose Merits were available, and Righteousness imputable to all the Race of *Adam*, tho' they, in their several Generations, might not have the Happiness to know it. And if this (as it seems to be) is the import of the Words, then will it follow, that *Christianity*, in this Sense, was *as old as the Creation*; that Mankind, in the earliest Ages of the World, were under the same Dispensation, in effect, that we are now; had the same Admission to the Throne of Grace; the same Assistance (tho' not in Degree) to live virtuously; and, ^c *if any Man sinned*, the same Advocate with the Father, even *Jesus Christ the Righteous*, who is the eternal Propitiation for Sin: and the only difference is, ^d that what was *originally* engag'd for, is since *actually* fulfill'd; and the Blessings, which they had,

but

^a John ii. 1.
 methods of Religion.

^d Edward's Survey of the Me-

but were not acquainted with, God in his good appointed Time has declar'd unto us by an exprefs Revelation. But, all this while, they were under the same Covenant, and, (upon a proper use of the Means afforded them) in the same state of Salvation, with us: for *in every Age, and every Nation, he that feared God, and worked Righteousness, was accepted with him*; and 'tis injurious to his Goodness, and Justice, and other sacred Attributes, to say, that he either is, or even was, a *respector of Persons*.

and a fitness that
less perfect
Dispensations
shou'd go
before,

And as he *is no respecter of Persons*, so has he always discover'd himself to be a *God of Order*, and not of *Confusion*: and therefore it seems requisite, that he shou'd proceed by Degrees, and not introduce the most perfect Dispensation, till others, of an inferior and less perfect Nature, had gone before. In the Creation of the World, we read, that Trees, and Plants, and all kinds of Vegetables were made, before *Beasts*, that have a *sensitive Life*; and that all kinds of *Beasts* were made, before *Man*, who has a rational Soul, and is the most excellent of all God's Works in this lower World; and, in like manner, 'tis reasonable to suppose, that God shou'd make a gradual Increase in his Revelations,

tions, and proceed from the Shadow to the Substance, from Types to Realities, and from lesser to greater Discoveries. And to this purpose the Apostle to the *Hebrews* informs us, that the *Worthies*, who liv'd under the Law, and had ^f obtained a good report by Faith, received not the promise (i. e. the full Intent of it, in the coming of Christ) God having provided some better things for us, that they, without us, should not be made perfect. Tho' therefore we may think with the Royal Preacher, that ^s truly Light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the Eyes to behold the Sun; yet we are to consider, that the *Darkness* of the Night, which may resemble the Religion of Nature, and the *Dawning* of the Day, which may represent the Institutions of the Law, were to have their stated Periods, before our ^h Sun of Righteousness was to rise with healing in his Wings, i. e. the Prince and Saviour of Mankind was to make his Entrance upon the Stage of the World, not till after the legal Services were expired, the Predictions of the Patriarchs and Prophets accomplish'd, and the Appearances of Angels, and Visions, of Revelations, and extraordinary Declarations from

^f Heb. xi. 39, 40. ^s Eccles xi. 7. ^h Mal. iv. 2.
ⁱ Edward's View.

from Heaven had made way for his arrival.

and that
the Gospel
should be
publish'd
just at the
Time,
it was.

These, and many more Reasons, that might be produced, seem to Apologize for the Wisdom and Goodness of God (for it is God that is *ultimately* struck at in the Objection) in delaying the Dispensation of the Gospel; and what might determine him to the *particular time*, wherein he vouchsafed it, was the miserable State and Condition, in which the World then lay. The Prophet *Micah*, speaking of the Times, that were to precede the Christian Revelation, has these remarkable Words; * *Therefore Night shall be unto you, that ye shall not have a Vision; and it shall be dark unto you, that ye shall not Divine; and the Sun shall go down over the Prophets, the Seers shall be ashamed, and the Diviners confounded, and the Day shall be dark over them*: And, accordingly, we may observe, that, from the time of *Malacki*, to the coming of *John the Baptist*, all Prophecy was suspended, and the extraordinary Directions and miraculous Attestations, which God, in former Times, vouchsafed his own People, and in them the greater part of the *Gentile* World, were totally withdrawn: So that Religion began to decay every where, and

Vice

* Micah iii. 6, 7.

Vice and Wickedness to prevail more than ever. Among the *Jews* (as¹ their own Historian tells us) their Priests and People, their Church and State, their Doctrine, Discipline, and Manners, were all deprav'd; and, among the *Gentiles*,
^m *It is a Shame even to speak of those Things, which were done by them in Secret.* With the *Empire* came in all Sensuality and Debauchery; and the Virtue, Modesty, and Sobriety of ancient *Rome* were laid aside. They were *Adulterers, Effeminate, Abusers of themselves with Mankind, Thieves, Covetous, Extortioners*, (ⁿ as their own Poets and Historians testify) ^o *and such were some of you*, (says the Apostle to the *Corinthians*,) *but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Spirit of our God.*

Here then was a proper Season, when The Re-
 Men had so universally corrupted their ways, for a Divine Revelation to inter-
 pose: and this is the great Argument, ^{formation which at first it made in the World.}
 which the Apologists for Christianity insist on with so much Triumph, viz. that the Converts to their Institution immediately became quite other Men, and practis'd all kinds of Virtue with
 incre-

¹ *Josephus de bello Jud.* ^m *Eph. v. 12.* ⁿ *Vid. Juvenal. & Salust. Passim.* ^o *1 Cor. vi. 9, &c.*

incredible Zeal, though they had been never so vicious and profligate before.

“ Give me a Man (says *P. Lactantius*) as
 “ passionate and abusive, as lewd and
 “ lascivious, as can be imagined, and,
 “ with a few Instructions of God, I’ll
 “ make him as Meek and Innocent as
 “ a Lamb ; could even any of the Phi-
 “ losophers do this ? ” And indeed, if
 we look round the World, ^a where, but
 in Christian Profession, do we find any
 true Devotion exclusive of Superstition
 and idolatrous Ceremonies ? Where any
 Acts of real Charity, such as clothing
 the Naked, and feeding the Hungry,
 and founding Hospitals for the Poor ?
 Where Persons, of the highest Rank,
 condescending to the lowest Acts of
 Humility ; Kings and Emperors, with
 their own Hands, feeding the Needy ;
 and Queens and Empresses administering
 to the Sick ? In what other Institution,
 I say, can we find such a generous
 Contempt of the World, as to under-
 value Riches and Honours, amidst an
 Affluence of them ? Where such Ab-
 stinence and Moderation in the most
 lawful Enjoyments ; where such Pati-
 ence and Perseverance under the most
 severe Trials ; where such Zeal and
 Fervour, such earnest Contention for
 Victory

^a Lib. 2.

^a *Nichol's Conference*, Vol. 1.

Victory over Sin, and ardent Aspirations after Heaven and Happiness, as was universally remarked among Christians in the Primitive Times?

Nay, in those Times, not only the *Professors* of Christianity, but even such as rejected it, received several Advantages from the Force and Influence of its Doctrine. * Their Oracles ceas'd; their Idols were destroy'd; and the Oblation of humane Sacrifices (which was accompanied with many cruel and impure Rites) was every where intermitted: Morality was taught by their Philosophers in much greater Perfection, than ever it was before: The Vices, which made up so great a Part of their sacred Mysteries, appear'd too abominable to pass any longer for Religion; and their idolatrous Worship became such a reproach to them, that they sought out all Arts to refine and excuse it; being ashamed at the Comparison, when they saw Christianity, (wherever it prevail'd,) * establishing a Worship suitable to the pure and spiritual Nature of God, a Worship of the Heart, consisting of Prayers, and Praises, and Thanksgivings to him, who is the Author of our Being, under whose daily Protection we live,

* *Jenkin's Reasonableness*, Vol. I. † Bp of London's 2d Pastoral Letter.

and from whose never-failing Bounty we receive all the good Things that we enjoy.

And the
great Good
it still
does in
the World.

It cannot be denied indeed, but that the Zeal of those Times is gone off, and the Influence of our holy Religion strangely abated; that a Spirit of Delusion and Infidelity seems to prevail, and gross Excesses and Irregularities are usually committed among Christians: But still we Appeal to our Adversaries, ' whether these Excesses would not become more general, and more flagrant, if the Restraints of our Religion were remov'd; whether the Commission of them is not far less frequent, and attended with more Caution and Shame, than among Heathens; and whether the Scandal and Enormity of them be not, in some measure, balanc'd by the extraordinary Degrees of Piety, Purity, and Exactness of Life and Manners, which Multitudes of its Professors exhibit. We may appeal to them, ' whether in those Countries, where Christianity is profess'd with any tolerable Purity, the generality of the meaner, and most vulgar and ignorant People have not truer and worthier Notions of God, more just and right Apprehensions concerning his Attributes and Per-

' Bp of London's 2d Pastoral Letter. " Clarke's Evidence.

Perfections, a deeper Sense of the difference of Good and Evil, a greater Regard to *Moral* Obligations, and a more firm and universal Expectation of a future State of Rewards and Punishments, than, ^w in any Pagan Country, any considerable Number of Men, at this Time, are known to have. And, lastly, we may appeal to them, whether this growth of Infidelity, and decay of Christian Piety (be it as great, as is supposed among us) be not a convincing Proof of the Truth of our Religion, since the blessed Author of it has not only assur'd us, that in his Kingdom here below, there should be always ^{*} *Tares growing with the Wheat*, and that, at his coming (such should be the general Apostacy) he would hardly ^y *find Faith on the Earth*; but his Apostle likewise has foretold us, that there^z *should come Mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly Lusts*, being like *Clouds without Water*, carried about of *Winds*; like *raging Waves of the Sea*, foaming out their own shame; and like *wandering Stars*, to whom is reserv'd the *Blackness of Darknes for ever*.

K k 2

And

^w Vid. Millar's Propagation of Christianity, c. 7. or Bp of London's 2d Pastoral Letter, pag. 33, &c.
^{*} Matt. xiii. 24. ^y Luk. xviii. 8. ^z Jud. xviii. 12, 13.

A Review
of the
whole
Argument.

And now to look back on what has been said. Since a *particular* Revelation, to some more than others, is consonant to God's Proceedings in his Works of *Creation* and *Providence*, wherein he has made a visible Discrimination of Things, Creatures of different Orders, and Men with different Capacities, and means of Improvement; and since a Revelation receives every thing, that is particular in it, both as to Persons and Times, not so much from the *Justice* and *Goodness*, as from the *Fore-knowledge* of God, which chiefly considers, what, in all Ages, will be most beneficial to all Mankind; no Imputation of *Partiality* can possibly fall upon God, tho' where this Favour *extraordinary* is imparted, there all grateful Acknowledgements are due. And, in like manner, tho' the Duration of Time be, in God's Account, of no avail; yet, since in all Ages of the World he has, one way or other, made Discoveries of himself, and of the true Religion, both to *Jews* and *Gentiles*, and, (upon the proper Use of the Means, which he afforded them) receiv'd them all along into Covenant, and a State of Salvation: Since, according to the wise Appointment of God, it was requisite that there should be a Subordination of Dispensations; the Gospel be usher'd in *gradually*,

gradually, and not fully appear, till the World was sufficiently prepared for it: and, lastly, since not long before it appear'd, all *extraordinary* Means of Knowledge were ceased, and both *Jews* and *Gentiles* sunk into such wretched State of Degeneracy, as call'd loudly for a Reformation; then was there plainly no *Cruelty* in God's delaying the Christian Revelation so long, but a great deal of *Wisdom* and *Goodness* both, in *timing* it just as he did. Once again, since the Christian Religion, at its first setting out, by the Force and Influence of its Doctrine, made a wonderful *Reformation* in the World in general, and, while the Zeal of its Professors was warm, discovered it self abundantly, not only in the common Virtues, but in all the difficult *Duties*, that were enjoined them; and since, notwithstanding the present Depravity of the Age, and the Wickedness, and Infidelity of too many *nominal* Christians, (which nevertheless is a Proof of the Truth of our holy Religion, in that it foretells that such a Defection, *in the last Days*, would certainly come to pass;) its good Effects are perceived^a in the general *Order* and Regularity, which are seen in most *Christian* Countries, and in the

K k 3 *exem-*

^a Bishop of London's 2d Pastoral Letter.

*exemplary Piety and Holiness, which are found among many Christian Professors at this Day; this will be enough to as-
 foil its Credit, and to justify the Character, which the Apostle gives us of it; ^b The Grace of God, which bringeth Salvation, hath appeared to all Men, teaching us, that denying Ungodliness, and worldly Lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present World; looking for the blessed Hope, and the glorious Appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all Iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar People zealous of good Works.*

THE CONCLUSION.

The Folly
 and Mad-
 ness of
 changing
 Christian-
 nity for
 the Reli-
 gion of Na-
 ture.

Thus we have examin'd the several Objections, which, of late, have been made against the Christian Revelation, and have endeavour'd to evince, that the *Prophecies* contained in the *Old*, and the *Miracles* recorded in the *New Testament* (which are the *external* Evidences of its Divine Origin) are to be understood in their *primary* and *literal* Sense; and, consequently, answer the Purposes, for which they are intended; and that the Excellence of its *Doctrines* (which is
 the

the *internal* Evidence of its coming from God) is such, as, upon Examination, is found to be consistent with the Divine Attributes, consonant to the Dictates of right Reason, and highly perfective of human Nature. And now I think we may be allow'd to ask those, who are so solicitous to *depose* Christianity, and, in its place to *advance* human Reason, as the only *proper* and *perfect* Rule of Duty, whether it gives them no *Uneasiness* to think of abolishing a Religion, which, at first, was *propagated*, in such a wonderful manner, and by such incompetent means; which, at its first Appearance in the World, was honour'd by the *Conversion* of so many Men of Renown for their Learning, and diligent Enquiries after Truth; which, in its *Infancy*, was not only *tried* to the uttermost, but even grew by *Opposition*, and *triumph'd* over all the *Power* and *Policy* of its Adversaries; which was *confirmed* by the blood and sufferings of so many *Martyrs*, and *Confessors*; is endear'd to us by the *Wisdom* of its Laws, and *Purity* of its Precepts; is recommended by the *good Examples* of many of its present Professors; and (with these Tokens of its Divine Extraction) is deriv'd from our Ancestors, and established by publick Authority: whether it gives them no Confusion,

to think of erecting, in its Stead, a Scheme, which, like *Nebuchadnezzar's Image*, ^b *Whose Head was of pure Gold, Breast and Arms of Silver, Belly and Thighs of Brass, Legs of Iron, and Feet part of Iron, and part of Clay*; (by giving every one a Licence to *model* for himself,) will produce as many different Religions in the World, ^c as the Capacities, Educations, Passions, Prejudices, Interests, and Humours of Mankind are different; and thereby not only fill us with a perpetual Scepticism and Disquietude of Mind, and involve Society in everlasting and irreconcilable Disputes, but pave the way likewise for the same Errors, Superstitions, and Deceits, that Revelation has happily deliver'd us from, and bring the World into the Darknes of *Heathenism* again.

In the name of wonder then, for which Reason is it, that Men are so desirous to ^d *forsake the Fountain of living Waters*, and so busy at work to *hew out to ourselves Cisterns, broken Cisterns, that can hold no Water*? Is it because our holy Religion has so little regard to human Pride and Vanity, that ^e *it casteth down Imaginations, and every high thing, that exalteth itself against the Knowledge of God, and bringeth*

^b Dan. ii. 32, 33. ^c Dr. Burnet's 2d Conference.

^d Jer. ii. 13. ^e 2 Cor. x. 5.

eth into Captivity every thought to the Obedience of Christ? Is it because it lays too severe Restraints upon their Passions and Appetites, and prescribes Rules of too much Purity and Holiness for their deprav'd Natures to submit to? Is it, in short, their Attachment to such Vices, as it forbids, that makes them ^f *love darkness rather than light, because their Deeds are Evil?* “No, by no means, *say they*, our only Intent is to set the World free from the *Slavery* of vulgar Errors, the *Tyranny* of Priests, and the heavy Yoke of *arbitrary* Impositions.” Ah wretched Freedom! that, to deliver us from one imaginary Error, brings upon us a thousand real Evils; that sows the Seeds of all Confusion; saps the Foundation of all Societies; opens a Sluce to all kinds of Wickedness, and takes from Mankind his only Comfort in time of Distress. For, what is it, that supports us in all the various Calamities incident to this Life? what is it, that calms the Conscience, and gives the Mind a sweet Repose, in all its Fears and Perturbations? Above all what is it, that raises our Spirits, when all worldly Comforts fail us, on our Bed of Sickness, or in the hour of Death?
“ Ah!

^f John iii. 19.

“ Ah! ^g if Religion which produces
 “ these blessed Effects, be an *Imposture*,
 “ let me enjoy my Error still; him I ac-
 “ count my most cruel Enemy, that
 “ goes to awaken me out of this plea-
 “ sing Dream.

For, let us suppose, that, in the Event of Things, the Gospel should prove an *Imposture*, as the Infidel pretends; yet the Arguments, upon which we believe it, are so fair and conclusive; the Prophecies, which went before concerning it, so fully accomplish'd; the Miracles, which support its Divine Authority, so well attested; and the Morality, which its Laws enjoin, so pure and excellent; that our Submission to it cannot be imputed to us as a Crime. ^h He, who believes, and obeys it, may appeal to the strictest Judge, with a just Confidence, that he has done all, that cou'd be required of a rational Creature: that he has assented to nothing, but what carried the fairest Marks and Characters of Truth; nor done any Thing, but what right Reason assur'd him was his, and every honest Man's Duty to do. But, on the contrary, if the Gospel be (as we firmly believe it is) a Divine Revelation, the

^g *Quod si in hoc erro, quod animos hominum immortales esse credam, libenter erro; nec mihi hunc errorem, quo dilector, dum vivo, Extorqueri vole. Cic. de Senec. ad finem.* ^h Rogers's Necessity of Divine Revelation.

the Infidel, who rejects it, is eternally, irrecoverably lost and ruin'd. His Crime admits of no Excuse, of no extenuating Plea, which can offer itself to the Compassion of the Judge; for this is the Judge's own Determination of the Matter, ⁱ *If I had not come, and spoken unto them, they had not had Sin; but now they have no Cloak, no Pretence, or Apology* (for so the word *πρόφασις* means) to make for their Sin.

Here then let the Infidel (if he can be serious for a moment) pause a little, and consider with himself, that if the matter under debate shou'd chance to prove true *on our side*, with what Astonishment must he come forth, in the Day, when he shall see that despis'd *Galilean*, the meek and holy *Jesus*, whose Religion and Laws have so long been the Scorn of his wanton Railleries, exalted in the Majesty of his Kingdom, *Angels, Authorities, and Powers being made subject unto him*. With what Confusion will he behold him seated on his Throne of Judgment, and the Fate of every Creature suspended on his Sentence; the Heavens and Earth passing away at his Word, and every *jot and tittle* of that *Gospel*, which he despised, fulfilled and ratified. With what Agonies of guilt and

ⁱ John xv. 22.

and despair must he approach the offended Presence, and hear that terrible Sentence from his Judge, ^k *Those mine Enemies, who would not that I shou'd reign over them, bring them out, and slay them before me; for ^l how shall we escape (as the Apostle argues) if we neglect so great Salvation, which, at the first, began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirm'd unto us by them, that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with Signs, and Wonders, and with diverse Miracles, and Gifts of the Holy Ghost?*

'Tis an easy Matter to make a jest and banter of these Things; a small share of Wit, and a good deal of Confidence will do it at any time: but the Question is, Whether this is a proper Occasion for *trifling*, when no less than the Terms of our everlasting Happiness, or our everlasting Misery, is the Point in Controversy. *As a Madman*, says Solomon, ^m *who casteth Firebrands, Arrows, and Death, so is the Man, that deceiveth his Neighbour, and says, Am not I in sport?* But what Description, what Comparison can be found equal to his Madness, who deceives and destroys himself, and that to all Eternity, and yet says, *Am not I in sport?* Is not this the very Pink and Perfection of true Wit and Raillery? But, what
says

^k Luke xix. 27. ^l Heb. ii. 3. ^m Prov. xxvi. 18, 19.

says the Scripture to all this? ⁿ *Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter; ° do they provoke me to Anger, saith the Lord, do they not rather provoke themselves to the Confusion of their own Faces? In that Day, ^p when the Lord Jesus Christ shall be reveal'd from Heaven, with his mighty Angels, in flaming Fire, to take Vengeance on them, that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting Destruction, from the Presence of the Lord, and from the Glory of his Power.*

And now the Conclusion of all, and the great End indeed, for which I have endeavour'd thus far to satisfy most of the popular Objections, which, of late, have been raised against the *Truth* and *Evidences* of our holy Religion, is, that we be not carried away with the *Humour* of Infidelity, which is too prevalent in this Age, but ^q *take heed to ourselves, and to the Doctrine, which we have receiv'd, and wherein we stand; ^r holding Faith, and a good Conscience, which some having put away, concerning Faith have made Shipwreck.*

ⁿ Is. v. 20. [°] Jer. vii. 19. ^p 2 Thess. i. 7, &c.
^q 1 Tim. iv. 16. ^r 1 Cor. xv. 1. ^r 1 Tim. i. 19.

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